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COALITION NAVIES DURING THE KOREAN WAR

UNDERSTANDING COMBINED NAVAL OPERATIONS

Edited by Ian Bowers

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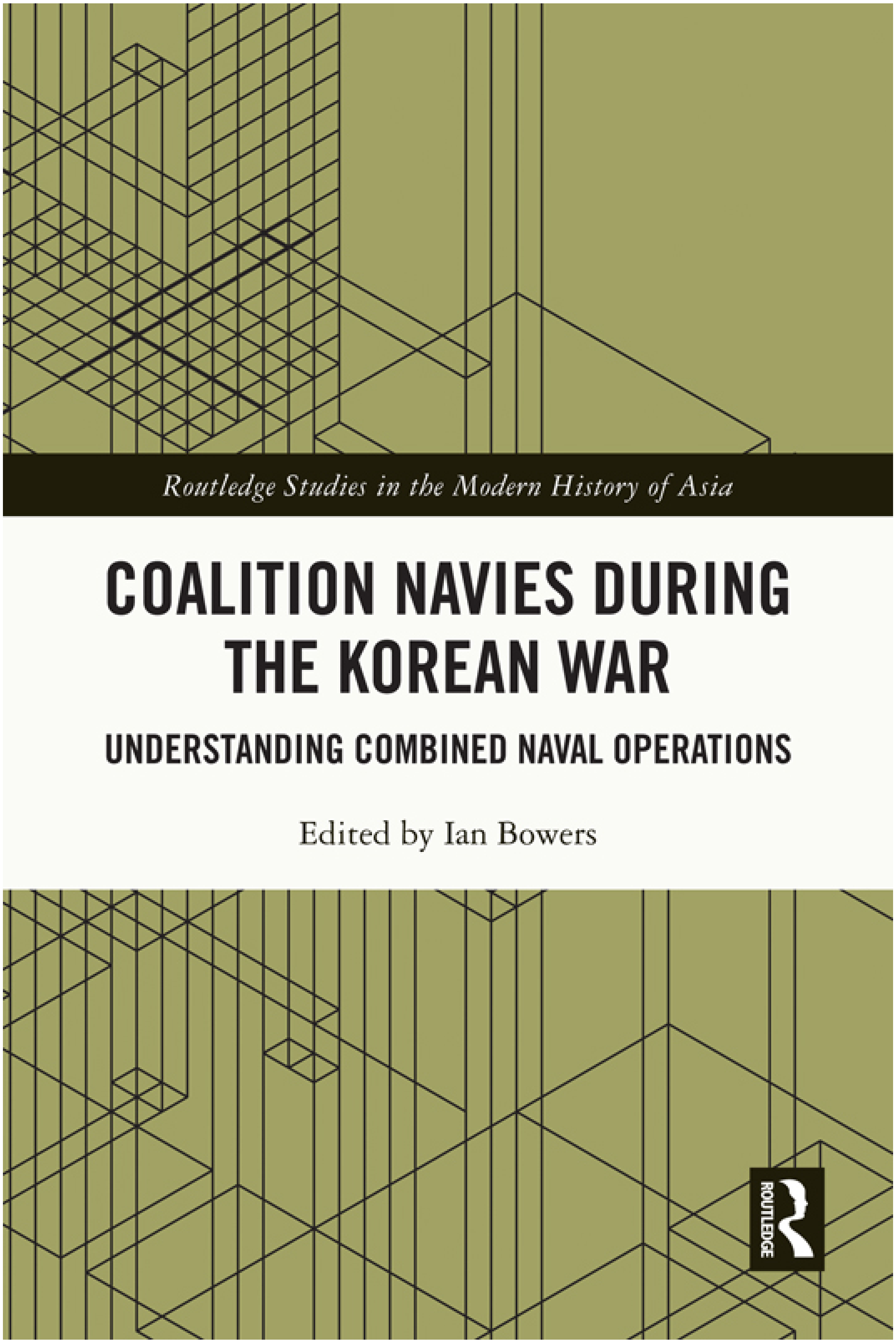

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Coalition Navies during the Korean War

This book presents a detailed assessment of the role of navies in the Korean War. It highlights that, despite being predominantly a land war, navies played a vital part. Moreover, the naval war was not solely a U.S. operation. Smaller navies from many countries made important contributions both in supporting the United States and carrying out independent and combined naval operations. This subject holds special importance since current Western strategic thinking and capabilities emphasise the necessity of combined naval operations involving multiple navies in any potential future naval conflict. The example set by the Korean War therefore offers valuable insights into the operational and strategic problems, and benefits and opportunities of contemporary and future combined coalition naval operations.

Ian Bowers is an Associate Professor at the Centre for Joint Operations at the Royal Danish Defence College, Denmark.

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Understanding Combined Naval Operations

Edited by Ian Bowers

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Abbreviations

ACP	Allied Communications Publication
AKL	Light Cargo Ship
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
ANZUS	Australia-New Zealand-United States
ASW	Anti-Submarine Warfare
ATP	Allied Tactical Publication
AUKUS	Australia, United Kingdom and the United States
BPF	British Pacific Fleet
C2	Command and Control
C4 ISR	Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance
CATOBAR	Catapult Assisted Take-Off But Arrested Recovery
CINCFES	Commander in Chief Far East Station
CINCPACFLT	Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet
CMC	Canadian Maritime Commission
CNO	Commander of Naval Operations (Korea)
CNO	Chief of Naval Operations (United States)
CNS	Chief of Naval Staff

COMNAVFE	Commander, Naval Forces Far East
CTE	Commander, Task Element
CTF	Coalition Task Force
CVX	Carrier Experimental
DD	Destroyer
DDE	Escort Destroyer
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
FO2FE	Flag Officer 2nd in Command
FOCAF	Flag Officer Commanding Australian Fleet
GB	Gunboat
HMAS	Her Majesty's Australian Ship
HMCS	Her Majesty's Canadian Ship
HMNZ	Her Majesty's New Zealand Ship
HMS	Her Majesty's Ship
JMS	Japanese Minesweeper
LCI	Landing Craft Infantry
LHD	Landing Helicopter Deck
LLOC	Land Lines of Communication
LO	Liaison Officer
LSSL	Large Landing Craft Vessel
MSTS	Military Sea Transportation Service
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PC	Submarine Chaser
PCS	Patrol Coastal Ship
PF	Patrol Frigate
PG	Patrol Gunboat
PT	Patrol Torpedo Boat
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RCN	Royal Canadian Navy
RN	Royal Navy
RNZN	Royal New Zealand Navy
ROE	Rules of Engagement

ROK	Republic of Korea
ROKN	Republic of Korean Navy
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
SLOC	Sea Lines of Commination
STOVL	Short Take and Vertical Landing
TF	Task Force
TG	Task Group
TTP	Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures
UHF	Ultra High Frequency
UN	United Nations
UNC	United Nations Command
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
USN	United States Navy
VHF	Very High Frequency
YMS	Auxiliary Minesweeper
YO	Fuel barge

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Foreword

The Korea Institute for Maritime Strategy (KIMS) is a private non-profit think tank that raises awareness of the sea's importance, contributes to the development of sound maritime policies, and ultimately strives to create a safer and more peaceful world. Established in 1997, the institute has been dedicated to identifying and analysing emerging and urgent issues in the maritime domain. In doing so, KIMS engages with experts and institutions from both home and abroad.

Produced under the leadership of KIMS, this volume shows how close teamwork has been achieved by eminent experts from South Korea, Europe, and the United States. They each provided breathtaking knowledge to help readers understand the role of the Coalition Navy during the Korean War. I would like to thank all the chapter contributors for their dedication. In the order of the volume chapter, I hereby acknowledge Dr. Ian Bowers, Dr. Deborah Sanders, Dr. Corbin Williamson, Dr. Jihoon Yu, Dr. Eric French, Dr. Tim Benbow, Dr. Richard Dunley, Dr. Steven Paget, Dr. Timothy Choi, and Mr. Anders Puck Nielsen. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Ian Bowers for editing and proofreading this volume.

From 1950 to 1953, navies from nine countries fought large-scale conventional wars in Korea as part of a multinational coalition. Although these nations differed in backgrounds, languages, and military traditions, these differences were put aside and united by camaraderie, a common purpose, and a determination to prevent the spread of aggression. Indeed, their indomitable fighting spirit, unrelenting courage, and tireless determination played an important role in turning the tide of the war and defending the freedom of the Korean people. Ironically, however, this conflict has remained a ‘forgotten war’ for a long time.

This volume sheds light on the roles of the coalition navies whose contribution to the war has been underestimated to some extent. The book is a testament to how instrumental the power of the projection by naval coalition could be in achieving tactical and strategic effects in the war. I am confident that this book will be of great help to readers at home and abroad who want to understand the contributions of the maritime coalition forces during the war and the lessons that can apply to the maritime operations of the future war.

Especially since 2023 marks the 70th anniversary of the armistice agreement that ended the war on the Korean Peninsula, this book is all the more timely and more meaningful. Above all, it will be of great value to our present and future security, where security threats in the region are increasing.

Chung, Eui-Sung
Chairman
Korea Institute for Maritime Strategy

1 Introduction

The Naval War in Korea and Combined Naval Operations

Ian Bowers

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The re-emergence of geopolitical tensions in both Europe and Asia has forced militaries and governments that lead them to engage with the prospect of developing and maintaining deterrence and defence postures aimed at countering peer or near-peer adversaries. After decades of enjoying the United States' so-called unipolar moment and then engaging in costly counter-insurgencies, militaries, and in particular those in Europe allied to the United States, are now attempting to reorient and update their equipment, doctrine, and personnel to reflect this new strategic reality. This is occurring at times of economic stringency. In many cases, militaries have to spend substantial funds just to reach a baseline operational capacity, let alone update their platforms and equipment to a level that can effectively operate in contemporary and future operating environments.[1]

In East Asia, states such as South Korea and Japan now face an operational environment where China has combined significant mass and increasing levels of technology to develop a military force that poses challenges across the operational spectrum.[2] Simultaneously, North Korea is an actor that is driving the same states to adjust their force posture continuously in response to an evolving nuclear threat.[3]

These issues are reinforcing in the minds of military leaders the value of combined military operations.[4] Even the U.S. military, which enjoys the largest defence budget in the world, is facing capability gaps when it comes to keeping sufficient platforms forward deployed while also meeting maintenance and training requirements.[5] Put simply, allies are becoming ever more important. For navies, this is especially true. Many fleets across the world have shrunk at a time when the operating environment is arguably more challenging than ever, and the prospect of losing one platform would substantially reduce the operational capability of many navies.[6] Near peer combat or maintaining an effective deterrent is not a role that most navies can effectively now perform alone, and even the U.S. Navy is looking towards close, like-minded partners to bolster their strategic posture in Europe and Asia, maintain good order at sea, and operationalise a more effective deterrent and defence posture.[7]

Despite their importance, a surprisingly small amount has been written about how navies should conduct combined operations, what problems emerge in their execution, and how they affect, in particular, the smaller members of such a coalition. In recent times, navies have not faced a peer or near-peer adversary in combat. While navies have carried out multiple and challenging combined operations in both coalition and alliance settings, for example, sustained counter-piracy and counter-terror missions, these are not the same as deterring or, if necessary, fighting an adversary of similar or, in some areas, superior capabilities. Contemporary warfare at sea is likely to be short and sharp, with effective command and control (C2), in whatever form, being a prerequisite to ensure that the kill chain from detection to effect is executed at the fastest possible speed. This will require an unprecedented level of interoperability between navies and likely a fundamental change in mindset if combined warfighting operations at sea are to be successful. Pooling naval power through combined operations either facilitated by a formal alliance such as NATO or an ad hoc coalition of forces is one of the best solutions to the problems outlined above. It is for this reason that this volume came into existence.

Why the Korean War at Sea?

This volume seeks to draw examples from a previous conflict when navies from 11 different countries came together to conduct complex warfighting operations around the Korean peninsula. The naval component of the Korean War is an often forgotten part of what was predominantly a ground war fought over the mountains and valleys of the Korean Peninsula. Yet, operations at sea were vitally important to the overall war effort and had a lasting impact on many of the navies that participated.

For the U.S. Navy, it was, in many ways, a proof of concept for forward-deployed naval forces and their ability to influence events on the ground. The U.S. Navy responded rapidly to the North Korean invasion and in doing so demonstrated the importance of power projection from the sea. The consequence was a model of U.S. naval power and maritime strategy that lasts to this day. For combined naval operations, the war demonstrated the opportunities provided by working with other states, the difficulties it poses, and the methodologies needed to overcome barriers to effective interoperability. The Korean War at sea set the tone for combined naval operations particularly in NATO but also beyond for the duration of the Cold War.

The Korean War provides an excellent window into the difficulties and opportunities that arise from combined naval operations and their effect on future force development. By using case studies based on some of the navies that contributed to the naval component of the conflict, this volume makes a value-added contribution to the academic literature by shedding fresh light on the conflict at sea during the Korean War and identifying key lessons that can be used to ensure greater effectiveness in coalition naval operations. To do so, it asks the following questions.

- What role did coalition navies play during the Korean War?
- What factors explain the successes and failures of combined coalition naval operations during the Korean War?
- How did operating within a coalition affect the internal development and relative position of participating navies following the end of the Korean War?
- What lessons for contemporary combined coalition operations can be drawn from the Korean War?

The Korean War at Sea

The Korean War began on 25 June 1950 when North Korean forces crossed the 38th Parallel and quickly overwhelmed the inferior and ill-prepared South Korean troops. Within two days, Seoul fell, and the North Korean army continued to push what were now UN forces southward until their advance was finally brought to a halt by September following the six-week-long battle of the Pusan Perimeter.[8] Over the next year, the Korean War developed into a series of brutal land campaigns with momentum shifting from one side to the other following UN advances and then the Chinese entry into the war. What followed was two years of near stalemate, with combat occurring on and around the 38th Parallel until the signing of the armistice on 27 July 1953.

Despite being predominantly a land and air war, navies played an important role in an excellent demonstration of their flexibility and warfighting utility. As Table 1.1 shows, although the majority of the UN naval forces came from the U.S. Navy, the fleet also included ships from ten other countries. As Chapter 3 describes, these ships all fell under ultimate U.S. control in the Korean area of operations. However, they brought their own unique procedures, skill sets, niche capabilities, and national-level priorities to the operation.

Table 1.1 List of navies and their contributions to the United Nations Command (UNC) during the Korean War

Country	*Forces deployed*
United States	Naval Forces Far East
South Korea	Republic of Korea Navy
United Kingdom	The Royal Navy sent a range of vessels, including aircraft carriers, cruisers, destroyers, and frigates.

Source: U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command, *Korean War – Ships and Aircraft* (https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/wars-conflicts-and-operations/korean-war/korea-ships-aircraft.html); UNC, *International Contributions* (https://www.unc.mil/Organization/Contributors/); Samuel P. Porter, ‘In Dangerous Waters: Japan's Forgotten Minesweeping Operations in the Korean War,’ *The Asia Pacific Journal- Japan Focus* 20: no. 17 (2022).

Country	*Forces deployed*
Australia	The Royal Australian Navy deployed 13 vessels in total throughout the war, including an aircraft carrier.
Canada	The Royal Canadian Navy deployed eight frigates to the conflict maintaining three in theatre at any one time.
Columbia	The Columbian Navy rotated three frigates through the Korean theatre of operations throughout the war.
Thailand	The Royal Thai Navy deployed between two and three ships to UN naval forces in 1950.
The Netherlands	The Royal Dutch Navy attached one destroyer to UN naval forces throughout the war.
New Zealand	The Royal New Zealand Navy maintained two ships throughout the war.
Denmark	The Royal Danish Navy deployed one hospital ship.
Japan	The Japanese Maritime Safety Agency secretly deployed a number of minesweepers to support U.S. naval forces. These ships did not formally join the UNC.

Source: U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command, *Korean War – Ships and Aircraft* (https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/wars-conflicts-and-operations/korean-war/korea-ships-aircraft.html); UNC, *International Contributions* (https://www.unc.mil/Organization/Contributors/); Samuel P. Porter, 'In Dangerous Waters: Japan's Forgotten Minesweeping Operations in the Korean War,' *The Asia Pacific Journal- Japan Focus* 20: no. 17 (2022).

Within a few days of the outbreak of the war, U.S. vessels already operating in the area assisted in the evacuation of U.S. citizens from the peninsula, and by day 5 of the conflict, the U.S. Navy cruiser *Juneau* initiated the first shore bombardment of the conflict.[9] A few days later, U.S. Navy and Royal Navy ships (that were also operating in the region before the outbreak of the war) engaged and destroyed most of small North Korean naval force. Indeed, on the opening night of the conflict, a Republic of Korea Navy (ROKN) PC found and sank a North Korean ship carrying 600 North Korean troops heading to the port of Busan.[10]

What followed in those opening days of the war was a demonstration of the multiple mission sets that naval forces could carry out. Taking advantage of the weaknesses of the North Korean navy and the geography of the Korean Peninsula, UN naval ships conducted shore bombardments of enemy landlines of communication (LLOCs) along both coasts, contributing to the disruption of logistics.[11] American and British naval aircraft struck targets, including airfields close to the North Korean capital Pyeongyang. UN naval forces also enforced a blockade, severing North Korea's major sea lines of communication (SLOC) and conducted two vital amphibious operations, including the now famous landing at Incheon on 15 September 1950.[12] This landing not only distracted North Korean forces from the battles around the Pusan Perimeter but also allowed UN forces to recapture Seoul, cut North Korean supply lines, and provide a window of opportunity for UN forces at Busan to break out. In combination, these actions forced the North Korean army into retreat and put UN forces on the offensive. In this phase of the war, naval power proved itself to be an important and, at times, decisive supporting element for the land campaign.

As the war progressed, naval forces maintained a substantial presence off the coast of Korea. UN naval forces continued to conduct strikes on North Korea with a focus on disrupting LLOCs and logistic facilities in North Korea. UN ships also continued shore bombardment, disrupted North Korean fishing activities, landed small units on the coast, and conducted a constant battle against naval mines. Vitally, naval and maritime forces also ensured that supplies that maintained the land forces fighting on the peninsula were securely delivered to South Korean ports. As Edward J. Marolda writes about the U.S. Military Sea Transportation Service (MSTS), the forerunner to the Military Sealift Command, and its role in the Korean War, ‘during the three-year conflict, MSTS (Military Sea Transportation Service) transported 5 million passengers, more than 52 million tons of cargo, and 22 million tons of fuel.’[13]

Combined Operations at Sea – Some Considerations

A large proportion of recent military and naval operations have been combined in nature. Yet there is little written about the specific considerations that combined operations require. Combined operations themselves occur in many forms, from full-scale combat, as seen in World War II and the Korean War, to maritime security operations, as seen in the combined between various and counter-piracy efforts.

The extent and type of combined operation are usually determined by the level of interoperability that exists between participating states. In NATO, an organisation with a long history of developing and maintaining interoperability standards, there are four levels of interoperability as shown in Table 1.2, each of which has implications for how militaries work together in a specific area of operations.

Table 1.2 Levels of interoperability

Level 3	Integrated: Forces can operate alongside each other without barriers using a common language, C2, capabilities, and standard operating procedures.
Level 2	Compatible: Forces can operate alongside each other with few barriers using 'similar complimentary processes and procedures.'
Level 1	Deconflicted: Forces can operate in the same operational area but with little interaction due to significant differences in language, capabilities, and procedures.
Level 0	Not interoperable: Forces cannot operate alongside each other.

Source: NATO, *AJP-01 Allied Joint Doctrine Edition F Version 1 with U.K. National Elements* (Brussels: NATO Standardization Office, 2022), 116.

In the naval realm, using these distinctions, one can understand combined operations occurring in multiple forms. These could range from different nations' vessels or commands taking responsibility for individual areas of operation or specific tasks (Level 1) without the need for tactical interoperability to a fully integrated task force where ships or platforms work seamlessly together in the same way a national fleet is designed to do (Level 2 or 3). An example of the latter would be the integration of vessels from multiple countries into a carrier group, as was seen with U.K. Carrier Strike Group 21 when U.S. and Dutch ships formed part of the group alongside their UK counterparts. Indeed, in that case, a squadron of U.S. Marine Corps F-35B deployed from the HMS *Queen Elizabeth* with a Royal Air Force squadron for the duration of the deployment, demonstrating a high level of interoperability.[14]

It is also important to understand that achieving operational interoperability is about much more than having compatible equipment and technology (although that is important). Both NATO and U.S. doctrine argue that interoperability also requires an alignment in, or at least an understanding of, national-level concepts of operations, doctrine, and terminology and a high level of trust and understanding between the personnel on the ground, on ships, or in headquarters.[15] A disconnection in any of these areas can cause significant problems, particularly in high-end operations. As Steven Paget writes in his important work on coalition naval operations:

> Effectively, the successful enactment of interoperability involves the capacity of equipment and personnel from different nations to work together both harmoniously and effectively. Thereby, doctrine, equipment, TTPs and training are standardized or sufficiently similar to preclude the existence of barriers to interoperability.[16]

This volume suggests that familiarity and ethos go a long way to building interoperability at sea. As Tim Benbow writes in Chapter 5, the Commonwealth navies were able to work together almost seamlessly due to a level of common understanding built on wartime experience gained during World War II. However, as multiple authors note in this volume, personal relations are vital, particularly at higher levels, and while the mission can continue, often one poor relationship can hurt the attainment of optimal interoperability.

Strategic Interoperability

Given the breadth of requirements for interoperability, it is important to note that considerations much stretch across the levels of war.[17] At the strategic level, senior government and military leaders need to be able to reach a consensus on what the strategic situation is and what should be the correct response. In terms of the latter, the alignment of key elements, including rules of engagement, escalation steps, national caveats, and an understanding of public opinion across participating nations, are all prerequisites for successful combined operations. If any of these components at this level are not managed well, then unity of effort could be disrupted and the level of interoperability could be reduced at the operational and tactical levels. For example, in Afghanistan, the use of so-called national caveats on the use of force and deployability of troops in areas of higher instability greatly undermined NATO's ability to plan and execute operations at the speed and mass needed to have an optimal effect on the Taliban.[18]

In Chapter 2, Deborah Sanders places many of these problems in a naval context. However, she also argues that even if allies, due to capability limitations or political restrictions, may reduce operational efficiency, they often bring other political benefits such as internationalising a conflict. In the Korean War, for example, as Dunley points out in Chapter 6, the United States not only wanted to increase allied involvement in the conflict for operational reasons but also to maintain the image of this being a UN rather than a U.S. force. This important consideration in the 1950s is still relevant today, for example, in U.S. efforts to internationalise opposition to China's excessive and often illegal maritime claims. In doing so, Washington hopes to downplay a narrative of the United States versus China and instead emphasise that China's actions violate international laws and norms.

It should also be noted that navies are a useful and flexible tool for states attempting to create strategic effects through political and diplomatic means. The dispatch of naval forces to a combined force is often seen as an important signal of national commitment to either an ally or the international community. As Chapters 6 and 7 demonstrate, both Australia and New Zealand sought to commit naval forces as they were deemed easier and in the case of New Zealand, less risky, to deploy than a land contingent. However, they are a substantial demonstration of national support, and in the case of Australia, the dispatch of an aircraft carrier, the largest ship in the Royal Australian Navy, was agreed to in order to mitigate U.S. calls for the deployment of additional land troops (in this case unsuccessfully). Also as Ander Puck notes in Chapter 9, the dispatch of the hospital ship *Jutlandia* was the Danish government's solution to meeting U.S. demands for a substantial commitment of resources to the conflict while also mitigating negative reactions from the USSR.

Interoperability at Sea

Some analysts argue that navies are more interoperable and are, therefore, better able to engage in combined operations. Partly, this has been attributed to the nature of operating at sea, the challenges of which encourage cooperation between parties.[19] Further, operating in a global commons such as the maritime domain allows for greater freedom of manoeuvre, and it is, therefore, easier for governments to use navies in this fashion.[20] Moreover, on a technological level, naval task forces are relatively small in size when compared, for example, with equivalent land component units, arguably making combined C2 easier.

However, given the multitude of requirements outlined above, it would be wrong to state interoperability is easy for navies. The problem of strategic alignment cuts across all services and, in a naval setting, would likely be acute if there was a higher risk of a state losing a valuable national asset such as a warship. This is particularly true in a contemporary setting where a peer adversary such as China can inflict substantial damage and even weaker adversaries with little or no navy can now damage or sink naval vessels further from shore than ever before. A legitimate question that now faces every combined force planner is whether allies would partake in operations with higher levels of political or military risk.

On a tactical level, interoperability issues at sea are also always present. As Chapters 3 and 4 in this volume show, even in the 1950s, issues did exist in terms of communications and the ability of the smaller navies to cope with the number of communications being processed, different coding procedures, frequencies used, and differences in language. Due to operational necessity and the competency of the personnel involved, the various navies involved found solutions to many of these issues; however, they tended to take time and reduce efficiency.

Arguably, technology could mitigate some of these issues in the contemporary era. However, differences still exist. In NATO, there is standardisation across the alliance in multiple areas, including data and communication links, doctrine, and training. Nevertheless, barriers, particularly in terms of resources and technology but also in culture, national standard operating procedures and doctrine, and control of data. For example, the United States often favours its doctrine over NATO doctrine. This could lead to difficulties particularly if U.S. Navy commanders who have spent their service time in the Pacific, are unused to working with NATO commanders. Moreover, the U.S. Navy in many areas is superior to its NATO counterparts, particularly in Command, Control, Communications, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (C4ISR), cooperative engagement, and data processes. Put simply, the U.S. development of advanced warfighting technologies based on the rapid collection and exploitation of data is far beyond what most countries can manage.[21]

Even in the control of classified information, states tend to privilege certain partners and in U.S.-led naval forces, members of the Five Eyes nations may have access to more U.S. data than other allies. In non-NATO operations, where technological standards, doctrine, and language may be different, and some states may have little or no experience in working in a combined setting, these problems are likely magnified. For example, the UN Maritime Task Force, off the coast of Lebanon, as part of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon mission, had trouble in C2 due to difficulties in communications between non-NATO/EU ships.[22] Much like in the Korean War, these problems were overcome, but a question remains if that would be possible in contemporary high-intensity warfighting scenarios.

Preparing for Combined Operations at Sea

A key lesson that emerges from this volume is the need to develop and maintain the skills needed for combined operations. In that sense, the foundations of interoperability lie in the everyday business of naval diplomacy. Port visits, officer exchanges, combined professional military education, and even conferences all provide the important groundwork for the building of mutual trust and the relationships that successful combined naval operations rely on. This is true in an alliance setting and with non-aligned partners. This is an important point for navies operating in East Asia where alliances are almost exclusively bi-lateral with the United States.

Beyond this, consistent and varied naval exercises and combined operations at sea are the best methods of developing effective operational outcomes. NATO's program of developing common doctrine, exercises and maintaining standing maritime groups is a good example of this. However, even NATO, before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, struggled to maintain sufficient numbers of vessels in the standing maritime groups. Perhaps indicating that national priorities will take precedence over alliance ones. Nevertheless, the number of exercises and the close working relationships that the U.S. Navy now has with the ROKN and the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force provide a solid foundation for combined operations in a real-world setting.

What Smaller Navies Bring to Combined Operations?

It is also important to acknowledge that while larger navies may dominate in any combined operation, smaller navies can make a value-added contribution. In Chapter 2, Sanders expounds on what a smaller navy is and what it can bring to a combined operation. Chapter 4, Yu and French highlight how the ROKN provided valuable local knowledge particularly when operating in the littorals and when liaising with the local.

Moreover, smaller navies also provide some niche capabilities and can gap-fill weaknesses that the larger navy may not be able to address. During the Korean War, this was apparent in some areas such as minesweeping and operations close to shore. In contemporary operations, it is evident that the U.S. Navy still has substantial gaps in those areas, particularly given the potential early retirement of the Littoral Combat Ship. However, as Timothy Choi points out in Chapter 8, smaller navies struggle with force development problems of their own. Particularly building fleets that can not only deal with unexpected events such as the Korean War but also meet imagined strategic and operational requirements well into the future. While multifunctionality and vessel size may solve some of these problems, choices about warfighting priorities still need to be made.

What Does This Mean for Contemporary Combined Operations?

Many of the observations in this volume about combined operations during the Korean War remain relevant today. The opening of this introduction argues that combined operations will have increasing importance due to changes in the operational environment and the inherent limitations of many of today's navies. The usefulness of interoperability, the effort required to maintain it, and the importance of smaller navies within a larger coalition are three of the most meaningful conclusions that we can draw from naval operations during the Korean War. There is significant data that multiple navies have recognised this and are emphasising working with allies and partners both in exercises and in the real world. For example, in one year, the U.S. Navy and the ROKN will conduct approximately 20 exercises of varying sizes and complexity.

However, obstacles remain and navies need to be cognizant of some of the potential pitfalls that may arise in future combined naval operations. Two key areas that planners and analysts need to address are:

- The doctrinal and technological developments occurring across the U.S. military the overarching moniker of Joint All Domain Operations (JADO) have the potential to transform how the United States operates as a joint force.[23] The emphasis on the collection and interpretation of data and then the rapid execution of effects along with proposed changes in how the services interact with each other threatens to leave multiple allies behind. While the United States is making initial efforts to bring in some allies, combined operations with the United States may become increasingly difficult for all but a small number of advanced navies.[24] States like South Korea who need to operate alongside the United States in multiple warfighting scenarios be cognizant of this and adjust to changes in U.S. doctrine and technology. They may also need to accept that interoperability may become increasingly difficult and hence changes in operational plans may be required.
- Smaller navies can make a significant contribution to a coalition naval operation. However, as seen during the Korean War, some obstacles will need to be overcome to optimise operational effectiveness. In an East Asian context, smaller navies both native and external to the region can make a wartime operational contribution. However, planners need to be aware of national strategic concerns, risk assessments and the time it could take to deploy, and the effort needed to sustain even one vessel across the world. Taking the Korean Peninsula as an example, it may not be possible to build and sustain a combined naval fleet of a similar breadth should war break out again, particularly considering the increased risks of operating in close proximity to China. Indeed, states' wariness of souring relations with Beijing should be a consistent concern for coalition builders seeking strategic and operational alignment.

Structure of the Volume

Taking a national case-study approach in examining the coalition naval operations during the Korean War, this volume includes both large and small navies. Moreover, it attempts to draw out the implications of and lessons learned from such deployments at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. It shows that operations during the Korean War were by no means seamless but that solutions to tactical and operational problems were found as the conflict continued. Further, it demonstrates the lasting effects participating in the Korean War had on some nations, their navies, and their future force development priorities.

Chapters 2 and 3 of this volume are scene setters in that they provide the reader with an understanding of the importance of smaller navies in an operational setting dominated by one partner, in this case, the United States, and, importantly, how a large navy can develop C2 relationships in a combined operations setting. In Chapter 2, Deborah Sanders looks at the role small or smaller navies can play in combined maritime operations with allies and in coalitions both at the strategic and operational levels and asks why states chose to participate. She argues that at the strategic level, the participation of small navies in combined operations can turn what might be a unilateral into a multilateral maritime operation, enhancing its political legitimacy. It can also demonstrate support for an important ally, as well as support for international norms and values. Further, small navies can often provide both niche and critical maritime capabilities, such as anti-submarine warfare (ASW), and give operational commanders greater flexibility in order to meet operational requirements. As a result, smaller navies participating in combined operations can be a force multiplier and send very clear messages to allies and potential enemies, as well as advance foreign policy goals.

In Chapter 3, Corbin Williamson examines how the U.S. Navy viewed and worked with their smaller counterparts during the war. He argues that the U.S. Navy's efforts between 1945 and 1950 to retain the naval interoperability created during World War II with the Royal Navy and Royal Canadian Navy played a significant role in Korean War naval cooperation. In examining the overall command structure, communications, and doctrine of the multinational naval operations that occurred in the

Korean War, Williamson reveals both the enduring challenges of combined operations and how these challenges were handled in Korea.

In Chapter 4, Jihoon Yu and Erik French explore the role the Republic of Korea Navy played in the conflict. They highlight the ROKN's key strengths, including its contributions to inshore operations, local knowledge, and morale. They also examine the challenges faced by the young ROKN in terms of equipment, training, communication, and C2. Yu and French conclude by drawing several lessons from the ROKN's experience for combined operations incorporating developing navies today. Chapter 5, written by Tim Benbow, looks at the role of the third largest contributor of ships to the naval component, the Royal Navy. He shows that in addition to contributing a powerful naval force of its own, it also took command of and provided logistical support for Commonwealth and coalition forces operating off the West Coast of the Korean peninsula. This chapter then examines key elements of the Royal Navy's contribution to the war at and from the sea. It concludes by considering the main tactical, operational, and strategic lessons that the Royal Navy drew from the experience, particularly regarding operations with allies and naval aviation.

In Chapter 6, Richard Dunley looks at the rationale behind Australia's decision to deploy an aircraft carrier to the Korean War. This was the only time that an Australian aircraft carrier undertook an operational deployment, and it was one of the rare occasions that a smaller navy had contributed this capability in a conflict scenario. His chapter explores the decision-making behind *Sydney's* deployment, revealing the political value and symbolism of an aircraft carrier and its significance within coalition relations and wider diplomacy. Chapter 7, written by Steven Paget, covers the case of the Royal New Zealand Navy. His chapter examines the political and strategic logic behind the provision of naval forces to the UN operation. It highlights the diplomatic potential of naval deployments and argues that the provision of even small numbers of naval forces can deliver an outsized impact in terms of strategic outcomes. Wellington's commitment to the Korean War was, ultimately, a discrete but significant way marker in the future development of the Royal New Zealand Navy.

Timothy Choi, in Chapter 8, examines how Canada's participation in the Korean War ran against a force development plan that focused on ASW in the Atlantic. Not only was this deployment carried out initially by the Pacific fleet that would soon be relegated to a mere ‘training’ force, but the mission itself also involved nearly none of the ASW specialisation that was gained during World War II and was being cultivated in new construction. By framing his chapter in this way, he highlights the challenges inherent in a smaller-sized navy's attempt to match naval means with strategic ends during times of peace and the importance of multi-mission capabilities for countries with transoceanic interests. In Chapter 9, Anders Puck Nielsen writes about the unique Danish contribution to the Korean War with the deployment of the hospital ship *Jutlandia*. He demonstrates that a relatively small maritime contribution has the potential to establish lasting effects if the right factors are present. He identifies and explains these factors in terms of a combination of naval diplomacy theory and small state politics in the Cold War and uses them to show why the *Jutlandia* mission, in hindsight, looks so successful from a Danish perspective but also that the image of the mission today is highly romanticised. In reality, Danish politicians wanted to find the cheapest possible contribution that would be deemed acceptable by the United States without actually offering direct military support.

Notes

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2 Small Navies in Naval Coalition Operations

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Small navies played an important role during the Korean War in supporting the U.S. Navy (USN), as well as carrying out independent and combined naval operations. There was, however, a huge variety in the size and power of these small, allied navies, in the role they played, and the challenges they faced in operating alongside other forces. The range of navies discussed in this volume includes the more powerful Royal Australian Navy (RAN) as well as the much smaller Republic of Korean Navy. As will be seen, in the context of the Korean War, even the Royal Navy could be described as a small navy. These allied navies exhibited a tremendous variation in the type of roles they performed, from more traditional warfighting to participation in humanitarian operations.

This chapter explores what we might mean by the idea of a 'small navy' as this concept is central to what is unique about this volume. This chapter argues that in order to explain the diverse roles performed by allied navies during the Korean War, as well as the challenges facing allied navies engaged in coalition operations, it is important to adopt a more inclusive and broader definition of what a 'small' navy might be. For the purpose of this book, therefore, all of the allied navies, apart from the USN, will be described as ‘smaller’ navies. While recognising that there was a degree of variation between the capabilities and roles of allied navies in Korea, this chapter outlines the features that distinguish smaller navies from large ones. Whilst issues relating to size and capability provide obvious points of comparison, it is also important to consider other issues, including the adoption of different and, at times, more innovative solutions to the endemic problem facing all navies of balancing commitment versus resources, as well as how to effectively train and retain service personnel when faced with limited assets and capabilities. This chapter will then look at some of the more generic and enduring challenges small navies often face when involved in coalition naval operations and which are likely to influence the success or failure of such operations. These include the challenges of interoperability, including issues associated with sharing intelligence, technological differences and human factors, and differing rules of engagement (ROE).

What Is a Small Navy?

We begin, then, with the question: What is a ‘small navy’? This is an important debate when thinking about the variety of navies engaged in allied naval coalition operations in Korea and the various roles that they played. However, providing a clear definition of what might be meant by the term is far from easy. This is for three interrelated reasons. Firstly, most of the existing literature on maritime strategy has traditionally focused on larger navies. This is because the impetus to produce such theorising on the maritime aspects of war has been related to hegemonic struggles for sea control. Traditional works of maritime strategy tended to focus on war and the preparation for war and had very little to say about the contribution made by smaller navies.[1] Second, small navies are often overlooked as a specific area of investigation even though most navies in the world actually are small. There is thus a high degree of diversity between them, raising legitimate questions about the extent to which they can be subsumed under a single heading.[2] Third, navies themselves are often resistant to being labelled as ‘small,’ for reasons including organisational pride, inter-service politics, and budgetary appropriations. Navies often tend to be aspirational organisations, with even very small navies referencing traditional maritime theory as part of their *raison d'etre*. The Royal New Zealand Navy, for instance, has looked to find a way around this problem by describing its desire to be the best 'small nation navy' in the world.[3] However, this concept of a small state navy does little to clarify our understanding of what constitutes a small navy, because there is no clear relationship between geographical size and maritime power. Small states have often deployed large navies such as Venice or Portugal in the past, and large states have often also had small navies, as did Germany before Tirpitz and China until recently.[4] As a result of these issues, little until very recently has been written about small navies as a group, including their role in coalition operations.[5]

Small navies have been defined in various ways. The classic definition is that a small navy is, as Geoffrey Till notes, one with both 'limited means and aspirations.'[6] Other writers have also adopted a similarly narrow definition of small navies. Writing in 1986, Joseph R. Morgan claimed that the typical small navy was 'one that was limited in its power-projection capability and operational range.'[7] He argued that this was because small navies are designed to operate locally in a defensive mode with very limited objectives and were, as a result, unable to project their maritime power. Morgan concluded that small navies, unlike their larger counterparts, lacked either the capability or assets to be able to 'perform naval functions over large areas or with a great amount of force and effectiveness.'[8] Of course, it is exactly these sorts of limitations that can encourage small navies to engage in coalition operations, and through these expand the range and effectiveness of their activities. As such, even small navies defined in this way can have important roles to play across a wide range of activities. For instance, small Western navies in the Baltic Seas have looked to enhance their capabilities and ability to cooperate to deal with 'grey zone warfare' in what is an increasingly contested sea.[9] Small navies have also played an important role in conflicts including the Gulf War, in the former Yugoslavia, in East Timor and the Iraq War.[10] Small navies have also played an important role in addressing non-traditional maritime challenges. The very small Croatian, Irish, and Maltese navies have all contributed, albeit in different ways, to international maritime security operations.[11] In addition, the emphasis on issues such as maritime security, the maintenance of good order at sea, and anti-piracy operations as well as the recognition that large navies alone cannot address these issues has also served to reinvigorate interest in small navies and what role they can play in coalition operations. The announcement by Admiral Michael Mullen, then U.S. Chief of Naval Operations, in 2005 of the 1000-ship concept clearly demonstrated the importance of naval coalitions in addressing maritime challenges.[12] Whilst this concept of small navies is sufficient to allow for a discussion of some of the navies engaged in coalition operations during the Korean War, there are three difficulties.

Firstly, nominally large navies may deploy only limited assets in a given conflict, constraining their capabilities and roles and creating many of the challenges associated with truly small navies. These circumstances may arise for a variety of reasons: competing commitments elsewhere; domestic political considerations; or institutional opposition to the deployment from the navy itself. Even where a large navy deploys the bulk of its assets to a conflict, it may still be considered *relatively* small if it is operating in a coalition with a partner that has deployed an even greater force. In relation to the latter point, the British Pacific Fleet (BPF) 1944–45, perhaps the most powerful fleet Britain has ever deployed overseas, can be considered ‘small’ because it was operating alongside the USN in the Pacific as a junior partner.[13] ‘Small’ may therefore be a relative term with no absolute scale of measurement in terms of tonnage or hull numbers or a list of capabilities or ability to project power. Second, maritime power is relative and, as such, what a small navy is trying to achieve, and against whom, or what is a fundamental consideration.[14] The relative power of a small navy will be affected by what theatre they are operating in and which other navies or threats they might be up against.[15] Given these points, this volume also examines the Royal Navy's role as a ‘small navy’ in coalition operations in Korea. The resistance of the Chiefs of Staffs to employing Royal Navy assets on what was considered a secondary task limited the allocation of British naval assets in Korea to a force comprising a light fleet carrier capable of flying only piston-engined aircraft, two cruisers, and five to eight destroyers and frigates.[16] Relative to their U.S. allies, this was a very limited contribution with significant limits on its capabilities.

Third, given the wide variety of navies within the ‘small navies’ category, not all are necessarily weak or limited in the same ways in terms of power projection, and lumping them all together in this way limits the analysis. Sustainment and logistics will be context-dependent and are likely to vary with each of the navies discussed in this volume. These are important issues that need to be explored rather than simply stated or assumed. In addition, a small navy is not necessarily a weak navy, and a large navy is not necessarily powerful. A large navy with obsolete vessels and lots of poorly trained personnel is larger but not more powerful than a smaller navy with modern, capable ships and well-motivated and highly trained service personnel. A focus, therefore, on assets and the ability to project power tells us little about small navies' contributions to and the challenges they faced in naval coalition operations in Korea.

Numerical strength or size is clearly an important, but not the sole or the decisive, factor when attempting to define a small navy.[17] Numerical strength, for instance, tells us little about the combat power of a navy or how many of its platforms are equipped with modern technology or effective weapon systems. The number of platforms a navy operates also reveals little about the configuration of its fleet. A large navy could very well be made up of smaller platforms unable to project power far from home. And equally, a smaller fleet could have significant power projection and sustainment capabilities. Similarly, the numerical superiority of a navy can be reduced if a naval force has to operate in two or more widely separated theatres. The Russian Navy, for instance, maintains four fleets in widely separated maritime theatres. As events in the Black Sea have demonstrated, the ability to surge maritime power from one theatre to another can be severely restricted even for a large navy. In thinking about the power of a navy, it is also important to factor in intangible elements. These include the level of training of the fleet, the sailors' educational qualification, as well as the degree of adaptation demonstrated by service personnel, morale and discipline, combat readiness, and leadership.[18] Intangible elements can be a powerful force multiplier when thinking about the relative power of a navy. In the era of sail, the Royal Navy was not always numerically superior to other navies but was a far more effective fighting force due to its much better seamanship, high morale, inspiring leadership, and aggressive spirit.[19]

Given all of these factors, for the purpose of this volume, we have therefore adopted a broad definition of what constitutes a small navy; a definition that is in many ways much simpler and more inclusive. As such, this book offers a range of case studies examining some of the 'smaller' navies that contributed to coalition operations during the Korean War. All navies operating alongside the USN in this conflict can be defined as a ‘smaller’ navy in much the same way as the BPF was a ‘smaller’ navy in the Pacific. This broader understanding allows for a more comprehensive examination of the many challenges of naval coalition operations as well as the development of insights on how to make these more effective in the future. It allows for the development of some generalisations from the specific case studies without getting trapped in definitional discussions regarding the relative power of each contributing navy. Instead, each chapter will explore what unique challenges were faced by the respective smaller navy in contributing to naval coalition operations. Taking a broader approach to understanding small navies will also allow the chapters in this volume collectively to draw out important lessons on how to improve the effectiveness of allied naval cooperation in the future.

Considerations for Small Navies

In addressing these issues, each of the chapters that follow begins by looking at the role each smaller navy played in coalition operations during the Korean War. As will be discussed, many factors affect a state's naval contribution to, and role in, allied operations. These include what sort of navy a state operates, as well as issues relating to the practicality of operating alongside allies. While many writers see the differences between small and larger navies as ‘more of a degree than of a kind,’ there is a recognition that the former have often adopted different solutions to the latter, which will affect their contribution to coalition operations.[20] So while all navies face resource constraints, smaller navies, denied economies of scale, will have to address these challenges in different ways which could affect the ways in which they participate in allied operations. Tough choices often have to be made by small navies between various capabilities, whether to modernise or construct new platforms, procure new systems that are developed for the exact specification required or buy second-hand or off-the-shelf maritime platforms. These trade-offs ultimately affect what a small navy can bring to naval coalition operations and whether they will be more or less interoperable – perhaps operating older Western platforms, having ships with a more limited range of capabilities or lacking logistic support. So, for instance, while operating in Korea, the Royal Canadian Navy faced a number of logistical challenges in maintaining a continuous naval presence on the opposite side of the world, something that many smaller navies face in coalition operations. As discussed by Timothy Choi in Chapter 8, the lack of sovereign logical support for its deployed ships during the Korean War meant that Canadian crews had to rely on American and British supply chains, and this had an extremely negative effect on crew morale.

Other factors that could affect a smaller navy's contribution to allied operations include decisions to engage in role specialisation and abandon roles and capabilities that no longer seem vital to national interests. These individual choices in force configuration will affect the assets and capabilities they can deploy and their ability to contribute to various naval coalition operations. Small navies can, therefore, often offer at best a more limited menu of assets and capabilities to a lead nation in a naval coalition. A small navy with more of a niche capability, on the other hand, could, depending on the capability, be militarily very useful in a naval coalition operation. For example, the BPF's experience in the Pacific suggests that niche capabilities can, at times, play an important role in coalition operations dominated by the United States.[21] The Royal Navy deployed two specialist niche capabilities to the Pacific, including the ‘Highball Bombers,’ the bouncing bomb designed for use against shipping, and XE-craft, a type of midget submarine. While the XE-craft was used to cut Japanese undersea cable communications and attack shipping in Singapore harbour, the Highball bombers were never deployed. This example suggests that the usability of niche maritime capabilities will vary enormously and that they can be far less useful when they are peripheral to the dominant partner's conception of how a war should be fought.[22]

An additional specific challenge facing small navies that operate only a limited number of ships is the difficulty of ensuring that service personnel gain enough command experience. This lack of command experience can affect the interoperability of smaller navies in a coalition operation. Small navies have traditionally looked to get around this problem by being active participants in naval exercises and naval coalitions. The participation of smaller navies not only enhances the legitimacy of an operation and demonstrates commitment to international values or an alliance, but also has important operational benefits for the participating state and makes them more interoperable in future operations. For instance, the Romanian Navy's participation in NATO's counter-terrorism operations in the

Mediterranean, Operational Active Endeavour, increased its professionalism, readiness, and interoperability with NATO allies.[23] Through active participation in naval coalition operations, smaller navies can overcome the challenges of training and retaining service personnel and enhance interoperability with key allies.

What Are the Challenges of Naval Coalition Operations for Smaller Navies?

While integrating navies is generally recognised as easier than assimilating land or air forces, smaller navies do face a range of challenges in working alongside allies.[24] Integrating navies is seen as less challenging, as ships are self-contained and their mobility provides a high level of flexibility that allows them to be used in exercises more easily and more often than land forces. Despite what is often seen as the inherent interoperability of navies, there is, however, a recognition that this process still 'requires goodwill and hard work.'[25] This section explores some of the enduring challenges to allied operations that can cause challenges; starting with what is perhaps one of the most important, and most challenging, elements of naval coalition operations – the requirement for interoperability.

Interoperability is defined as 'a measure of the degree to which various organisations or individuals are able to operate together to achieve a common goal.'[26] Despite this ostensibly simple definition, achieving interoperability between naval coalition partners can be difficult for a number of reasons. Interoperability can often be situationally dependent: What works in one maritime theatre or during one type of maritime operation might not work in another. In addition, interoperability can also come in various forms and degrees, and it can also occur at various levels of war.[27] Interoperability at the strategic level, for instance, is an enabler for coalition building. Success, however, necessitates coalition management and attempts to harmonise and bring into alignment what can often be differing national goals and objectives of the contributing states. As Colin Gray notes, this can be challenging as allies can be 'both a curse and a blessing' sharing the strategic load but also increasing it.[28] During the Gulf War, for instance, the United States and its coalition partners had to work very hard to keep the coalition together. The inherent fragility of the coalition meant that ‘a great deal of effort had to go into negotiating, compromising and maintaining its cohesion.’[29] There are additional difficulties in allied coalitions. The political and military costs of working alongside allies for individual states, particularly the lead state, can be high, and equity in decision-making can be difficult to achieve. There are likely to be differences of opinion between partners as to how to achieve the stated goals or even what the goals are in the first place and whether and when these have been achieved. In addition, the commitment of individual states to the operation is unlikely to be uniform and may, in any case, change over time given developments at the strategic and operational/tactical level. Allied operations can also reduce the operational tempo and ultimately prolong a conflict. In allied operations, trade-offs exist between the political benefits of having smaller navies participate and the constraints on military effectiveness that this brings to an operation.[30] The lead state often has to accept a degree of operational ineffectiveness to gain political benefits from the participation of partners in an allied operation.[31] Each of the chapters in this volume will therefore consider the many challenges facing smaller navies in working alongside the USN and other smaller navies during the Korean War and how this affected operational effectiveness.

Achieving operational and tactical level naval interoperability between larger and smaller navies and across small navies can also be problematic and affect the success of coalition operations. Interoperability at these levels is where the political leadership's strategic goals are realised.[32] Ideally, interoperability at the operational and tactical levels provides the lead state in a military operation with inter-changeable and mutually reinforcing assets that can be used to accomplish the mission. Depending on the operation, this can take a variety of forms, from a tightly integrated operation to a coordinated portioning of the mission or maritime theatre into separate country-specific zones.[33] Operational-level integration can also vary between smaller navies from those that might be fully interoperable at the command level to those that adopt a more ad hoc approach to integration that might include, for example, the extensive use of liaison officers (LOs). While operating in support of, but independent of the USN, the BPF 1944–45 recognised the importance of embedding personnel into all levels of the U.S. command structure as a way of facilitating interoperability between the two navies. The exchange of LOs between the two fleets was seen by the British as a vital mechanism not only to facilitate sharing information and intelligence but also as a means of encouraging wider interoperability of the two navies.[34] Highlighting the important role played by LOs, the Admiralty stated that these were crucial as they 'were in a position to gather thorough and intimate knowledge of not only the organisation and methods of the US Fleet but the outlook and psychology of the officers and men of the Service, so that British ships and units on joining would be able to fit themselves harmoniously into service with our Allies.'[35] This practice of embedding LOs in the USN clearly paid off for the British in Korea. Rear Admiral Alan Scott-Moncrieff, who was one of the three Royal Navy admirals to command Task Force 95 operations on the west coast during the Korean War, had spent six months as a LO with the U.S. Atlantic Fleet in the spring and summer of 1941, so understood the USN and its culture and practises.

As well as embedding officers, there are other important ways smaller navies can achieve interoperability at the operational level. These include the adoption and development of multinational doctrine and increasing the number of naval exercises between allies. Multinational naval doctrine, for instance, can be important and was developed in the 1950s for ships sailing together, especially merchant vessel convoys, to address some of the common problems with working alongside naval allies. The former Allied navies of the Second World War initiated these agreements to facilitate cooperation in case of a conflict during the Cold War.[36] Common doctrine, procedures, and publications have been recognised as an important factor in mounting successful allied naval operations.[37] Exercises allow navies to identify technical mismatches between component parts of a multinational force so they can work as a more cohesive unit. They also allow for the development of key skills and can also help overcome the human and cultural challenges of interoperability. Naval exercises played an important role in allowing the 23 nations that made up the naval coalition formed after the Iraq invasion of Kuwait in 1990 to work effectively together.[38] A report by the U.S. Department of Defense to Congress on the conduct of the conflict highlighted the importance of previous exercises in facilitating the successful execution of the range of task required by the U.S.-led naval coalition. It stated that 'uniform procedures and communications methods developed during years of NATO, Australia- New Zealand- United States (Anzus), and various bilateral exercises greatly improved the Coalition's ability to work together effectively.'[39] Creating a virtuous circle, participation in naval exercises can also give smaller navies access to allied doctrine and publications further enhancing their interoperability. For the Argentinian navy, the participation in training with both the USN and other navies of the Western Hemisphere, which had begun in 1960, granted access to allied doctrine, procedures, and publications. These combined operations and training exercises enhanced its interoperability when operating with allies in the multinational coalition against Iraq in 1990. The extent to which naval cooperation was facilitated by exercises will therefore be considered in each of the chapters of this volume to determine if this was an enabler in facilitating greater interoperability between the allied forces.

Two additional factors that affect the operational and tactical interoperability of navies are technology and the challenges of sharing intelligence. Technological interoperability, where it works, is an important force multiplier as it enhances the fungibility and flexibility of naval forces available to a lead nation in a naval coalition operation.[40] As mentioned, depending on the nature of the naval coalition, the degree of technological interoperability may vary tremendously between the smaller navies involved. A lack of technological interoperability among coalition partners can pose a threat to the cohesion and effectiveness of naval coalition operations. In any allied operation, there will be a degree of 'technological asymmetry' amongst allies. This could include different degrees of reliance on technology by smaller navies, the utilisation of different forms of technology, and the use of technology by different navies for different purposes.[41] During the Korean War, differences in communication equipment between naval allies forced the USN to find ad hoc solutions and workarounds to allow operations to continue to run smoothly. As most of the UN warships operating in Korean waters were not fitted with UHF radios, which were increasingly adopted by the USN for more of their radio communications, multinational naval coalitions were forced instead to rely on VHF radio and visual signals to communicate. Ultimately, technological challenges between allies could force a lead nation to use their assets in a way that increases risks and diminishes the probability of success of an allied operation.[42] For instance, some analysts have argued that the NATO coalition air campaign in the former Yugoslavia, Operation Allied Force, was inefficient due to technological asymmetries between the United States and other NATO contributing nations. The technology gap was so large that, in some cases, U.S. pilots had to lower their safety norms, significantly increasing their risk factor, and due to the lack of up-to-date electronic countermeasure equipment on some European aircraft, allied air raids were considered more vulnerable to Serbian air defence systems than American air raids.[43]

While technological interoperability is clearly important, it is not, however, vital to the success of an operation. Effective naval cooperation can be achieved if there is a willingness to cooperate and ‘a basis of trust’ has been established between the more technically advanced and less advanced navies.[44] Professional trust and understanding of other navies, for instance, can play a role in mitigating technological asymmetries between allies. For example, for the Canadian Navy, it is the long history of naval cooperation and overall familiarity with the USN that has facilitated close cooperation and not the technical kit operated by Canadian ships.[45] In light of the indeterminate role played by technological integration, each of the chapters in this volume will explore the extent to which their smaller navies were able to work alongside the USN and other navies and what, if any, workarounds were found to address technological asymmetries.

A second challenge to achieving effective interoperability at the operational and tactical level is the willingness and ability of allies, in both large and smaller navies, to share intelligence. The collection, pooling, and sharing of intelligence between states involved in multinational military operations are seen as an indispensable feature of coalition warfare.[46] Sharing intelligence is always a sensitive issue, however, involving national collection rules that can make full sharing extremely difficult. For instance, during the Korean War, the United States had strict regulations on what intelligence could be shared, and with whom. As a result, the United States only provided information to the Commonwealth navies on a ‘need to know’ basis and the timelines for dissemination were also problematic.[47] The problems of sharing intelligence are not limited to ad hoc coalitions but can also be encountered between long-standing allies. For instance, even though Canadian and British allies share many common interests with the United States, ‘there will always be limits to [the US] sharing the most highly classified information with these nations.’[48] An additional challenge facing all smaller navies is the sheer amount of intelligence and communication that is shared in an allied operation. During the Korean War, communication problems arose between allies due to the need for more frequent and longer radio messages which crowded existing radio circuits that were structured for peacetime rather than combat operations. As Williamson points out in Chapter 3, the USN tended to have more radio operators and available circuits on board compared to British and Commonwealth ships. This meant that smaller navies tended to struggle to keep up with the volume of radio traffic generated by the USN. It is clear that, while sharing intelligence is recognised as important, it is not without its difficulties, not least of which is the challenges of establishing effective communication in allied naval operations. Each of the chapters that follow will therefore explore the extent to which this was an issue for their smaller navies and how it affected the mission.

Interoperability between navies is also likely to be affected by human and cultural factors. Human factors such as overburdened junior colleagues, misunderstood instructions, headstrong subordinates, and personality clashes can make naval interoperability much harder.[49] In addition, relations, particularly between key commanders, as well as their particular command style, can also be significant factors affecting interoperability both positively and negatively. For the BPF operating alongside the USN, the process of integration was facilitated by the commitment of the British to develop close working relationships with their U.S. allies.[50] Other intangible factors can also mitigate the challenges of working with allies. For instance, the interoperability of the BPF was facilitated by the similar outlook and intellectual heritage the Royal Navy shared with the USN. In particular, both navies had similar conceptions of the role of seapower in military strategy, which created a basis from which operational and tactical plans could be developed. This essentially allowed British planners to ‘slip more easily into an American planning framework’ making their voices heard in a language the USN understood.[51] In Korea, however, difficult relations between key U.S. and U.K. commanders and, in particular, the command style of the ambitious and, possibly anti-British, Rear Admiral George C. Dyer, commander of Task Force 95, caused considerable tension in Anglo-American naval relations and did little to enhance interoperability among key allies.[52]

An additional way of further enhancing the ability of smaller navies to work alongside other navies is by developing cultural or cognitive interoperability. This is defined as ‘the ability of units from different nations, forces or organizations to understand, respect and operate with a shared understanding of each other's values, assumptions and national caveats in a synergistic attempt to achieve their respective national interests.'[53] Ultimately, this is a shared way of doing business 'grounded in a common language, a similar ethos and comparable principles.'[54] Cultural and cognitive interoperability is in many ways the ideal form of interoperability, but might only be achievable by a limited number of smaller navies in certain theatres who also share considerable operational experience. For Steven Paget, the history of a shared operational experience between the Royal Australian Navy, the Royal Navy, and the US Navy in the Persian Gulf essentially underpinned their high level of cognitive interoperability during Operation Iraqi Freedom.[55] There are some important ways in which smaller navies can enhance cognitive or cultural interoperability, but these paths will not be open to all navies. This includes the development and delivery of common military education and training which produces officers who approach problems in a similar way and enhances interoperability by ensuring a mutual understanding of allies based on shared professional military education and values. This mutual understanding or coalition mindset can also be enhanced through military exercises, personnel exchanges, and the deployment of LOs.[56] While this level of interoperability is likely to be beyond many of the smaller navies engaged in allied naval cooperation in Korea, each of the chapters will nonetheless explore the extent to which human and cultural factors affected interoperability.

An additional factor that can also affect the success of allied operations is the extent to which there are differences in the ROE that each navy operates. ROE are standing orders formulated by political leaders, military planners, and legal experts as a means of ensuring that naval commanders at sea conduct their operations in compliance with national objectives.[57] ROE specify under what circumstances and in what way force can be used to achieve political and military objectives. In an ideal world, all naval coalition members would operate identical ROE. This would significantly increase the interoperability of navies and the fungibility and flexibility of assets available to the lead state and its naval commander. However, this is seldom the case as the ROE of any given coalition naval contingent are likely to be shaped by their particular foreign and security policy objectives. As a result, most states join an allied coalition with different restrictions on how they can use force. These differences can make combined operations more challenging and may reduce their effectiveness. For example, during the Vietnam War, the RAN was prohibited by their ROE from operating in or near Cambodian waters or from firing at targets near or beyond the Cambodian border. However, the ROE for the USN were far less restrictive, dictating that missions could not be conducted if there was a potential for the dispersion of fire to encroach over the Cambodian border. As a result, the more restrictive RAN ROE led to the cancellation of some combined missions and caused the lead state, the United States, some notable inconvenience in being forced to adjust assignments that were made up of both RAN and USN vessels.[58] An important aspect affecting allied cooperation in naval coalition operations therefore is the ROE that each navy operates and the extent to which there are national caveats and opt-outs. Some of the contributors to this volume will therefore consider the extent to which, and how, their smaller navies ROE affected naval operations and, if so, whether or not these changed during the war.

Conclusion

This chapter began by exploring what we mean by the term ‘small navies,’ as establishing a common understanding is important when looking at the role and challenges facing small navies in allied naval coalitions during the Korean War. For the purpose of this volume, the term ‘smaller navies’ will be used when looking at the different navies and the various roles that they performed in theatre. This terminology allows for a more inclusive examination of the specific and general challenges facing small navies in working alongside allies. A crucial difference between smaller and large navies is that the former are often forced to adopt more innovative solutions to problems. By exploring the extent to which each of the smaller navies participating in the UN coalition were able to adapt and how they adapted, this volume will provide important insights into future naval coalition operations. As discussed in the *Considerations for Small Navies* section of this chapter, many of the challenges facing smaller navies in operating alongside allies are longstanding, but the specifics are nonetheless important. Generic challenges such as achieving operational and tactical interoperability, the difficulties of sharing intelligence, asymmetries in technology, and differing ROE are common problems facing all navies working in coalition operations. However, each navy discussed in this volume faced these problems to a different degree, and how they adapted to these challenges is one of the important contributions this volume makes both to our understanding of small navies and our understanding of the challenges of coalition operations.

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3 The U.S. Navy and Combined Naval Operations during the Korean War

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The North Korean attack on South Korea and the United States' decision to support South Korea thrust the U.S. Navy into leading a three-year multinational naval campaign. During the Korean War, the U.S. Navy benefited from post–World War II efforts to retain the ability to operate with the Royal Navy and the Royal Canadian Navy. However, multinational naval operations in Korea still presented numerous challenges, including command, control, and communications. Overall, the U.S. Navy and its United Nations (UN) partners found solutions to most of these challenges, such that they did not significantly hinder naval operations. Many American officers came to view the international flavour of Korean naval operations as a sign that such operations would become more common in the future.

Postwar Interoperability Links

During World War II, the U.S. Navy fought alongside a number of allied navies in both the European and Pacific theatres.[1] Wartime operations involving ships from multiple nations revealed differences in ship design, communications practices, command and control, and equipment that complicated wartime cooperation. These differences often reflected the unique historical and operational context of each service. For example, American warships tended to have longer operating ranges than their British counterparts because the U.S. Navy built ships with operations in the vast Pacific against Japan in mind. In contrast, British warships were built on the assumption that ships could regularly refuel at one of the Royal Navy's worldwide network of bases.[2] Combined operations in World War II highlighted these differences that required liaison and cooperation to manage.

After the defeat of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, the Soviet Union gained access to a number of German engineers and copies of German military equipment, including advanced German submarines. As relations between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union deteriorated in 1945 and 1946, the American, British, and Canadian navies became increasingly concerned that the Soviets might draw upon captured German engineers and submarines to build a fleet of advanced Soviet submarines. In the event of a war with the Soviet Union, the capabilities of such submarines would render obsolete the bulk of anti-submarine forces created during World War II and would pose a serious threat to allied sea lines of communication.[3]

These concerns over future Soviet submarine capabilities led the U.S. Navy to maintain close ties with Britain's Royal Navy and the Royal Canadian Navy in the years after World War II. These navy-to-navy links began in the field of anti-submarine warfare (ASW) and represented a continuation of close cooperation during World War II.[4] The three navies exchanged liaison officers, sent officers to each other's staff colleges and war colleges, developed common ASW doctrine, and shared research and development projects. This early Cold War naval cooperation led to the production of a shared signal book, *Allied Communications Publication 175* (ACP 175) in March 1951 and a shared tactical book, *Allied Tactical Publication 1* (ATP 1), in January 1952.[5] Both of these books would be used in multinational naval operations in the Korean War. The Korean War inadvertently served as a test of the post–World War II efforts to maintain interoperability between the U.S. Navy and the British and Canadians. The Korean War demonstrated that the U.S. Navy had the ability to work with the British and Commonwealth navies with little warning.

Responding to the North Korean Invasion

At the end of World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union divided the Korean peninsula into two parts for the purposes of accepting the surrender of Japanese forces and administering the territory. Koreans looked forward to the departure of the Japanese occupation forces, though views on what a future Korea should look like were divided. Two competing Korean revolutionary movements vied for influence: Korean Communists led by Kim Il-Sung and Korean nationalists, of whom Syngman Rhee was a leading figure. The growing strength of Rhee's Korean Democratic Party in South Korea led to a violent uprising in South Korea beginning in April 1948 that was supported by Kim Il-Sung's Communist government in North Korea. By late 1949 and early 1950, South Korean security forces had made significant progress in subduing this insurgency, which undermined Kim Il-Sung's dream of unification of the Korean peninsula through revolution in the south. Kim sought and eventually secured Soviet and later Communist Chinese support for a conventional attack on South Korea, designed to achieve unification through invasion. This offensive began on 25 June 1950 with two North Korean Army corps driving deep into South Korea, taking the capital Seoul within days.[6]

On 27 June, the UN condemned the North Korean invasion, and within days, the United States and other UN members had committed naval and air forces to help defend South Korea.[7] The nearest naval forces with significant offensive capability were an American task force built around the aircraft carrier USS *Valley Forge* and a British force centred on the aircraft carrier HMS *Triumph*. The two carriers joined up and launched air strikes against North Korea on 3 July, inaugurating a three-year multinational naval campaign against North Korean and later Chinese forces.

While ground forces were naturally the central focus of the Korean War, seapower played a significant supporting role. The geography of the Korean peninsula and the course of the ground campaign tended to divide naval operations between the east coast and the west coast of the peninsula. Carrier-based aircraft operating from both the east and west coasts of Korea provided close air support for UN ground forces. These aircraft also attacked strategic and logistical targets in North Korea in an effort to reduce the flow of supplies to North Korean and later Chinese ground forces.[8] UN warships on both Korean coasts provided naval gunfire support to UN ground forces and sought to interdict Communist supply lines.[9] The UN navies played a central role in the most well-known amphibious landing of the Korean War, the assault on Inchon in September 1950. In addition to Inchon, naval forces supported other smaller amphibious landings, amphibious withdrawals, and coastal raids.[10] The UN navies also maintained a blockade of North Korea, countered North Korean efforts to operate small craft in coastal waters, and escorted convoys carrying troops and supplies to Korean ports against possible submarine attacks. Ships from a variety of nations contributed to this wide array of naval missions. The effectiveness of naval forces in these various missions was shaped by the command and control system used to direct naval operations.

Naval Command and Control in Korea

While the United Nations organisation provided international political support for the defence of South Korea, the UN's military command structure was built from the American command charged with the occupation and defence of Japan, the Far East Command. General Douglas MacArthur oversaw this command and also became Commander, United Nations Command in July 1950. Far East Command's naval forces were commanded by Vice Admiral Turner Joy, whose official title was Commander, Naval Forces Far East (COMNAVFE). However, Naval Forces Far East was only one of two American naval commands responsible for the western Pacific. The Seventh Fleet, under Vice Admiral Arthur Struble, was responsible for the western Pacific and reported to Pacific Fleet headquarters in Hawaii.[11]

The day after the North Korean invasion, operational control of the Seventh Fleet was transferred from the Pacific Fleet to Commander, Naval Forces Far East, though administrative control of the Seventh Fleet remained under the Pacific Fleet. As a result, Vice Admiral Joy had operational command of all U.S. naval forces in Korean waters as General MacArthur's naval commander.[12] UN navies that contributed to the defence of South Korea were placed under Admiral Joy's operational command.[13] Eventually, ships from South Korea, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New

Zealand, Thailand, France, the Netherlands, and Columbia operated under Commander, Naval Forces Far East.[14]

The bulk of Joy's warships were grouped into two task forces for the majority of the Korean War: Task Force 77 and Task Force 95.[15] Task Force 77 was centred on American large fleet carriers and their embarked aircraft and primarily operated on the east coast of Korea. Task Force 95, the Blockading and Escort Force, provided air and naval support for UN ground forces, maintained the naval blockade of Korea, and escorted supply convoys.[16] While Task Force 77 operated out of Yokosuka, near Tokyo, Task Force 95 operated out of Sasebo on the southern Japanese island of Kyushu. The 580 miles separating the two locations limited the exchange of personnel and information between the two task forces.[17]

Task Force 95 was divided into two Task Groups, one for the east coast of Korea and one for the west coast. The west coast Task Group was commanded by the Royal Navy's senior naval officer in Korean waters, Flag Officer, Second-in-Command, Far East. In June 1950, Rear Admiral William Andrewes held this position and became the commander of the west coast blockade and escort force.

Admiral Joy assigned the bulk of non-U.S. warships to this west coast force commanded by a British admiral for two reasons. Firstly, the initial British and Commonwealth contingents that arrived in Korean waters were smaller in size than the American naval contribution. The Korean west coast was shorter than the east coast and geographically had fewer targets in range of naval gunfire. Thus, the smaller number of British and Commonwealth ships would be better able to meet the blockade and bombardment requirements of the west coast than the east coast. Second, Admiral Joy intended for the American fast carriers to primarily sail off the east coast, which had a more open operating area than the west coast. Joy believed that it would be ‘best from the standpoint of coordination’ for American ships and British ships to operate in distinct areas.[18] In addition to these operational reasons, Britain had established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China while the United States had not. As a result, the Royal Navy was better positioned to be able to handle any diplomatic incidents with the Chinese Communists that arose due to operations off the Korean west coast.[19]

Joy's intent to have operating areas divided by nation was only partially realised over the course of the war. On the Korean west coast, American ships regularly operated with British, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand, Dutch, Thai, and Columbian units, while some British and Commonwealth ships also operated on the east coast for specific periods of time.

The closest multinational working relationship was between the American admiral in command of Task Force 95 and the British admiral in command of west coast operations. Seven American admirals commanded Task Force 95 between June 1950 and July 1953.[20] Three Royal Navy admirals commanded Task Force 95 operations on the west coast (known as Task Group 95.1) during the Korean War, as shown in the Table 3.1. The more frequent changes in the U.S. task force commander compared to the British west coast commander meant that the British admiral typically had more experience in Korean naval operations than his American superior. As a result, most Task Force 95 commanders delegated significant authority to the British west coast admiral.’

Table 3.1 Task Force 95 west coast commanders, 1950–1953

Task Group 95.1 Commander	*Period of Command*
Vice Admiral William Andrewes, RN	5 July 1950–10 April 1951
Rear Admiral Alan Scott-Moncrieff, RN	10 April 1951–16 September 1952
Rear Admiral Eric G.A. Clifford, RN	23 September 1952–18 November 1953

Andrewes and Scott-Moncrieff both benefited from having prior experience working with the U.S. Navy in World War II. Andrewes had served with the British Pacific Fleet, a carrier task force that operated with the U.S. Navy's Pacific Fleet in the spring and summer of 1945.[21] Scott-Moncrieff spent six months as a liaison officer with the U.S. Atlantic Fleet in the spring and summer of 1941 helping prepare American escorts for convoy duty in the North Atlantic.[22] These experiences helped both admirals understand U.S. Navy culture and practices, even if they did not always agree with American practice.

In fact, British commanders for a period found American command styles quite frustrating. Rear Admiral George C. Dyer's tenure as commander of Task Force 95 from June 1951 to May 1952 caused significant tension with British officers. Dyer had served on the Pacific Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations staffs in the early years of World War II and in June 1951 had just completed a tour as the deputy commandant of the National War College in Washington, D.C. Dyer arrived in Korea just as the ground war was turning into a stalemate and armistice negotiations were about to start.

Dyer believed that UN naval forces needed to put pressure on the Chinese and North Korean negotiators through extensive bombardment of North Korean and Communist positions.[23] He recognised and rewarded commanding officers who operated near the shore to draw Communist artillery fire and who returned fire. In his private correspondence, Dyer touted the high expenditure of bombs and shells by his command.[24] Dyer's approach to bombardment frustrated Rear Admiral Scott-Moncrieff and his staff who disagreed with Dyer's views about the impact of naval gunfire and air strikes on Communist negotiators. British officers also believed that high rates of unobserved gunfire and air strikes were uneconomical and ineffective. Britain's economy in 1951 was still recovering from the high financial cost of victory in World War II and the British government rationed food until the mid-1950s. Scott-Moncrieff let his views about Dyer be known among the officers of Task Force 95, while his chief of staff, Captain R.A. Villiers, was also openly critical of U.S. Navy methods.[25]

In addition to this operational approach, Dyer's command style also caused tension in Anglo-American naval relations in Korea. To a greater degree than his predecessors or successors as commander of Task Force 95, Dyer spent a significant amount of time at sea on his flagship, personally overseeing operations on both Korean coasts. Dyer's methods were a change from past practice, whereby the American commander of Task Force 95 had given the British and UN forces on the west coast more autonomy. Scott-Moncrieff and his staff disparaged Dyer's methods as leading to ‘a great deal of backseat driving.’ Dyer's command style led British officers to conclude that ‘they were not trusted’ to use their judgement to conduct operations.[26]

Dyer's replacement by Rear Admiral John Gingrich at the end of May 1952 as commander of Task Force 95 dramatically improved relations with Scott-Moncrieff and British commanders in Korean waters. Scott-Moncrieff's Royal Navy superior, Vice Admiral Guy Russell, wrote in mid-

July 1952 that he was ‘happier than I have ever been about Anglo-American cooperation … the departure of the rather ambitious and possibly anti-British Admiral Dyer has made a great difference all around.’[27] Ironically, Dyer himself thought highly of the British, describing them as ‘fine people and very friendly’ in November 1952.[28] However, his command style rather than his personal views defined relations with the British naval contingent in Korea.[29]

Communications

The efficiency of the naval command and control structure in Korea was closely related to the effectiveness of communications. Units that were in the same command structure from different nations needed to be able to communicate with each other, something that is a long-standing challenge for multinational forces. As far back as August 1795, Vice Admiral Duncan, RN, noted this reality when commenting on a combined British-Russian fleet: ‘a combined fleet are not of the consequence they appear...they do not understand each other's signals.’[30] The issue of multinational naval communications in Korea even arose (briefly) at the presidential level early in the war. At a U.S. National Security Council meeting on 28 June 1950, just days after the North Korean invasion, President Truman was informed of a British offer to provide naval forces to support the U.S. Navy in Korea. Truman directed that the offer be accepted and that ‘British forces should be placed under MacArthur.’ Secretary of Defence Louis Johnson demurred, noting that in ‘the last war,’ the U.S. Navy ‘did not want them [the Royal Navy]…due to a difference in signals and other difficulties.’ Truman disagreed, overriding Johnson's concern due to the political importance of having broad international support. Secretary Johnson's comment recognised that differences in communications practices between navies could complicate the effectiveness of a multinational naval force.[31]

While the U.S. Navy had worked with the British and Canadians to retain interoperability in the period between World War II and the Korean War, communication challenges still arose in Korean operations. The first problem encountered was that of scale. Combat operations demanded more frequent and longer radio messages, which crowded existing radio circuits structured for peacetime traffic levels. American warships tended to have more radio operators and available circuits on board compared to British or Commonwealth ships. As a result, British and Commonwealth ships at times struggled to keep up with the volume of radio traffic generated by the U.S. Navy. A British radio operator who served on the British carrier *Theseus* during the Korean War later recalled that 'Our lads [the radio operators] were snowed under [by the volume of radio traffic] …we couldn't cope.'[32]

Furthermore, the UN warships that responded to the North Korean invasion used different frequencies to receive radio traffic from their shore-based headquarters. British and Commonwealth ships in Korean waters were accustomed to receiving radio traffic from a radio station in Singapore on one frequency while American ships' radio rooms were structured to receive radio traffic from Tokyo on a different frequency. One solution would have been to order the radio rooms on British and Commonwealth ships to monitor the frequency used by the U.S. Navy to send fleet-wide messages. However, to do so would have stretched the radio capabilities of British and Commonwealth ships. Instead, a direct radio-teletype link was established between Singapore and Tokyo so that U.S. Navy messages could be re-broadcast on British and Commonwealth frequencies. This solution allowed ships from each nation to continue to monitor the frequency to which they were accustomed, though could result in delays in reception for British and Commonwealth forces.[33]

Differences in language and accent also slowed communications. A U.S. Pacific Fleet report on the initial months of the war noted that American pilots at times had difficulty understanding the voice transmissions from British or Commonwealth ships. These issues typically arose when aircraft provided spotting services for warships from a different country.[34] A Royal Navy report covering roughly the same period noted that the use of English for tactical voice radio communications made it difficult for ships from other navies, such as Thailand, South Korea, or the Netherlands, to keep up with communications.[35] After Thai frigates joined the UN naval command, Admiral Andrewes jokingly commented that his force now needed 'the gift of tongues so graphically described in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.'[36] Difficulty in understanding voice transmissions was also experienced by ships from the same nation due to regional accents. A British radio operator from Portsmouth in the south of England might have as much trouble understanding a Scottish radio operator as an American operator from Mississippi in the American South might have understanding an American operator from Boston in New England.[37]

Another challenge experienced by non-American ships was receiving radio messages encoded in a cypher not available to the ship's radio operators. The U.S. Navy gave British and Commonwealth, and UN warships in Korean waters access to some American cyphers but reserved some cyphers for U.S. Navy use. In formations where the presence of non-American ships was common, such as Task Force 95 on the west coast, American communicators became accustomed to sending messages in cyphers available in British and Commonwealth radio rooms. However, on the east coast of Korea, communicators at times encoded messages in cyphers only available to the U.S. Navy, which prevented non-American ships from accessing these messages. The solution was to retransmit the message in a cypher held by the non-American ships but this took time and added traffic to already crowded radio circuits.[38]

Differences in communication equipment also forced naval officers to find ad hoc solutions. At the time of the Korean War, the U.S. military was in the process of using UHF radio more and more for radio communications. However, UHF radios were not fitted in most UN warships operating in Korean waters. As a result, multinational naval formations relied on VHF radio and visual signals.[39] Furthermore, U.S. Navy ships were equipped with an infrared signalling device code named Nancy which enabled low-visibility visual communications at night. British and Commonwealth ships were not equipped with Nancy, which led Task Force 95 to use alternative methods for night communications.[40]

Operations in Practice

Despite this range of communication challenges, multinational naval operations in Korea were not significantly hindered by communication problems. Ship's personnel and command staffs developed solutions and work around to allow operations to continue. The introduction of common tactical publications like ATP 1 towards the end of the war eased some of the signalling challenges. American officers working with other UN ships frequently commented on the efficiency and effectiveness of multinational formations. Three U.S. Navy reports from the war illustrate this point. A U.S. Pacific Fleet evaluation of surface operations in Korea to date concluded in 1952 that:

> Blockade, screening, shore bombardment, patrolling and escort operations were accomplished smoothly and efficiently. Canadian, Columbian, New Zealand, Thailand, Australian, British, Danish, ROK, Netherlands, and US ships worked together harmoniously. The problems of language, dissimilar communications, naval maneuvering procedure, supply and logistics were all ingeniously solved with special techniques and extensive use of liaison officers and interpreters.[41]

At the tactical level, the captain of the light carrier USS *Bataan* reported on his ship's operations in a task force with the British light carrier HMS *Theseus* escorted by American, British, Australian, and Canadian warships in April and May 1951:

> The operations of 8–15 April and 1–6 May were notable for their international aspect and provided valuable experience of the units participating. Considering that the United States and British carriers and their mixed United States, British Commonwealth, and Netherlands destroyer screen were operating together for the first time the operations went off remarkably well … it is recommended that … every opportunity be taken to train and operate these forces in company.[42]

The captain of the light carrier USS *Sicily* concurred with the *Bataan* report, writing in 1952:

> It must be commented that the international character of the forces which comprise CTE [Commander, Task Element] 95.11 were no obstacle to smooth operation. The excellent seamanship and efficiency of the various screen commanders was particularly notable. Combined

> operations of this kind are felt to be invaluable in building good will and a sound foundation for future United Nations cooperation.[43]

The *Sicily* report shows that some American officers viewed the Korean War as a prelude to a future where multinational naval operations were common. American praise for the efficiency of multinational formations tended to come from ships and personnel in Task Force 95, which contained the majority of non-American warships. American ships and personnel in Task Force 77, the fast carrier task force that operated on the east coast, had less interaction with UN coalition partners than their west coast counterparts. Thus, the experience U.S. Navy personnel in Korea gained in multinational naval operations depended to some degree on where they were stationed. West Coast deployments provided deeper expertise in combined operations than east coast deployments. Since west coast deployments were more common in the surface ship community than in naval aviation, this branch of the U.S. Navy gained more experience in multinational naval operations during the war than the fast carriers and their embarked squadrons.

Conclusion

The experience of coalition naval operations in the Korean War convinced a number of American naval officers that multinational naval operations were going to be more common in the future, not less. Admiral Harold Martin, who commanded the Seventh Fleet from March 1951 to March 1952, concluded that the international operations in Korea 'became the basis for cooperation between the forces of our allies and the forces of the United Nations' in the future.[44] Martin and others, including the captain of the *Sicily,* referenced earlier, saw Korea as a model of things to come.

In particular, the war highlighted the need for Western navies to work together to be able to effectively counter the naval threat posed by the growing submarine capabilities of the Soviet Union. The ability to work together depended in part on personnel having experience cooperating with allies. The U.S. Navy tried to give a large number of admirals combat experience in the Korean War through frequent command changes. For example, 13 different American rear admirals commanded Task Force 77, the fast carrier force, during the Korean War. These frequent changes in command provided a larger number of commanders with experience in multinational naval operations, increasing the U.S. Navy's depth of experience in this arena.

In the years after the Korean War, the U.S. Navy's professional military education program changed in response to the war's multinational flavour. In August 1956, the U.S. Naval War College launched the Naval Command Course, a multinational seminar focused on improving allied naval interoperability. While small numbers of British and Canadian students had attended the U.S. Naval War College in the early Cold War, the creation of the Naval Command Course represented a sustained, significant shift in Navy education designed to prepare the U.S. Navy for future coalition operations.[45]

The Korean War also demonstrated that skill in multinational operations was a perishable skill unless regularly practised. In particular, multinational publications like ATP 1 had to be used in deployments and exercises in order for personnel to become familiar with them. Before the end of the Korean War, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) had begun an exercise program designed to give NATO navies the opportunity to practice using these publications and the experience of operating together. Exercises like Mainbrace in 1952 and Mariner in 1953 brought together units from a number of NATO navies to practice operating procedures and communications. The Korean War highlighted the need for and value of such exercises within the U.S. Navy. As one senior American naval officer later recalled, NATO tactical and signal books were used so frequently that in the 1950s, they became ‘the Bible of the Sixth Fleet’ and the Atlantic Fleet.[46]

Examining the U.S. Navy's experience in the Korean War suggests two insights for modern multinational naval operations. The first is the value of investing time and money in multinational exercises with clear objectives. Such exercises help maintain the skills and experience that are at the heart of interoperability. Such exercises can also be of value to units and organisations that are not able to participate. When such exercises occur, commanders should clearly establish training objectives exercises and task subordinate units with reporting on insights gained through these exercises. These insights can be shared across the Navy to allow non-participants to learn from the exercise experience.

Second, the work of solving the challenges inherent in multinational naval operations can be eased if the personnel involved have pre-existing relationships. Such relationships can be built during training exercises, staff visits, and professional military education opportunities. Sailors should take advantage of any and all opportunities to build professional relationships with sailors from allied navies. These relationships and the resulting trust are valuable resources that are created slowly through regular investment.

Notes

1. The views presented in this chapter are those of the author alone and do not represent the views of the Air War College, the Department of the Air Force, or the U.S. government.
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9. Steven Paget, *The Dynamics of Coalition Naval Warfare: The Special Relationship at Sea* (New York: Routledge, 2017).
10. Donald W. Boose Jr., *Over the Beach: U.S. Army Amphibious Operations in the Korean War* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 2008).
11. James Field, *History of United States Naval Operations, Korea* (Washington, DC: Naval Historical Center, 1962), 48.
12. Malcolm Cagle and Frank Manson, *The Sea War in Korea* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1957), 34.
13. Field, *History of United States Naval Operations, Korea*, 55.
14. Edward Marolda, ed., *The U.S. Navy in the Korean War* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2007), 351.
15. Early in the war Task Force 95, the Blockade and Escort Force, had a different task force number (96) for a brief period.

16. The name of Task Force 95 varied over the course of the war. For example, at the time of the Inchon landing, Task Force 95 was the Blockade and Covering Force. See Cagle and Manson, *The Sea War in Korea*, 84–85.
17. Barrie Kent, *Signal!: A History of Signalling in the Royal Navy* (Clanfield, UK: Hyden House, 1993), 175.
18. Cagle and Manson, *The Sea War in Korea*, 289.
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28. Rear Admiral George C. Dyer, USN to Commander Joseph A. Houston, USN, November 18, 1952, Folder 4, Box 2, George C. Dyer Papers, Naval Historical Foundation Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
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30. Eunice Turner, "The Russian Squadron with Admiral Duncan's North Sea Fleet, 1795–1800," *Mariner's Mirror* 49, no. 3 (1963): 214.
31. "Memorandum of Conversation of National Security Council Meeting, June 28, 1950," June 28, 1950, 2, Folder May–June, 1950, Box 68, Secretary of State File, Dean G. Acheson Papers, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/personal-papers/memoranda-conversations-file-1949-1953/may-june-1950-0?documentid=43&pagenumber=2.
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36. John Lansdown, *With the Carriers in Korea: The Fleet Air Arm Story, 1950–1953* (Cheshire, UK: Crecy, 1997), 55–56.
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4 The ROKN and Coalition Naval Operations in the Korean War

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This chapter evaluates the contributions of the Republic of Korea Navy (ROKN) in U.S.-led coalition operations during the Korean War. It explains the unique strengths and advantages that the ROKN brought to these operations, particularly its specialised inshore capabilities, local knowledge, and excellent morale. It also outlines how the incipient ROKN faced a host of challenges with respect to its equipment, training, communications, and command arrangements. This chapter concludes by reviewing how these strengths and challenges might offer lessons for future coalition naval operations incorporating small, indigenous naval forces.

Overview

The ROKN was still in its infancy when the Korean War broke out on 25 June 1950. The ROKN got its start in 1945 when navalist Son Won-yil helped organise the Joseon Maritime Association, dedicated to creating a South Korean navy. The U.S. military government subsequently established a small Korean Coast Guard in 1946, incorporating the Joseon Maritime

Association into this new body. With the assistance and training of several U.S. Coast Guard advisors, this new force expanded and developed, incorporating a number of former Japanese and United States minesweepers into its arsenal. When the ROK was founded in 1948, the Korean Coast Guard was officially renamed and rebranded as the ROKN. Son Won-yil was appointed the new navy's first Commander of Naval Operations (CNO).[1]

Although the ROKN expanded rapidly in the lead-up to the Korean War, it remained comparatively small and underdeveloped compared to the Republic of Korea Army. This was primarily due to the extreme poverty of the fledgling Republic of Korea and the United States concern that arming the ROK might provoke the Soviet Union. Indeed, the ROKN was only able to purchase some of its principal vessels by collecting donations from its underpaid officers and enlisted personnel. On the eve of the war, the ROKN fielded 6,624 men and 36 naval vessels.[2] These included four recently purchased U.S. submarine chases (PCs), 15 U.S. auxiliary motor minesweepers (YMS), 10 Japanese mine warfare ships (JMS), 1 U.S. landing ship tank (LST), 1 patrol gunboat (PG), 1 U.S. landing craft infantry (LCI), 1 U.S. light cargo ship (AKL), 1 U.S. fuel oil barge (YO), and 2 gunboats (GB).[3] It was headquartered in Seoul but had its main base in Jinhae where it could take advantage of basic naval facilities constructed by the Japanese empire during its colonisation of Korea to create its own shipyard. It also had its Naval Academy in Jinhae along with basic naval stations at the harbours in Busan, Gunsan, Incheon, Mokpo, Mukho, Pohang, and Yeosu.[4]

Over the course of the war, the size, composition, and quality of the ROKN would shift considerably. Despite losses in manpower and ships, the ROKN had expanded to include 14,862 men and 57 naval vessels by the time of the armistice in 1953.[5] The ROKN also added significant new platforms to its arsenal, ending the war with four U.S. patrol frigates (PFs) as well as three U.S. patrol torpedo boats (PTs), four U.S. large landing craft vessels (LSSLs), and four U.S. patrol craft sweepers (PCSs). It also dramatically expanded its small fleet of LSTs and AKLs, ending the war with four and five of these vessels, respectively. The ROKN also added another PC, PG, and YO to its budding fleet.[6] Finally, the ROKN gained invaluable training and experience over the course of the war. The U.S. Naval Advisory Group assisted in training 134 officers and noncommissioned officers for the ROKN, and countless additional officers gained extensive practical experience fighting alongside coalition naval forces.[7]

Throughout the conflict, the ROK operated closely alongside coalition forces as part of the United Nations Command. Shortly after the outbreak of war, the ROKN was put under the authority of COMNAVFE, which then appointed Commander (CDR) Michael J. Luosey to serve as the Commander of ROK Naval Forces. CDR Luosey worked closely with ROKN CNO Son to integrate the ROKN into allied naval efforts. The ROKN subsequently was organised as part of the United Nations Blockade and Escort Force Coalition Task Force (CTF) 96 as Task Group (TG) 96.7 on 10 July 1950. When the UN Blockade and Escort Force was reorganised as CTF 95 on 15 November 1950, ROKN forces were included as TG 95.7.[8]

Despite its diminutive size and relative inexperience, the ROKN played a key role as part of the UN coalition during the war. At first, the ROK was assigned to enforce the UN blockade against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the south of the Korean Peninsula (below the 37th parallel), working to limit DPRK efforts to reinforce and resupply its forces from the sea.[9] ROKN vessels were also employed on an ad hoc basis to evacuate allied forces, casualties, equipment, and refugees as needed during the DPRK's rapid advance down the Korean peninsula in the early stages of the war.[10] Over time, ROKN vessels were also assigned increased responsibilities supporting the blockade alongside other coalition navies along the East and West Coasts, working to both foil DPRK resupply efforts and curtail commercially significant DPRK fishing.[11] Furthermore, the ROKN was integrated into UN minesweeping effort along the coast, supplying YMS and JMS vessels to contribute to UN demining operations in Wonsan harbour and beyond.[12] Small craft from the ROKN also played important roles in shore bombardment, offshore island control, and guerilla raids.[13]

Key Strengths

What advantages did this small, indigenous navy offer to a coalition of more advanced and capable naval powers like the United States and the

United Kingdom? Why did the U.S.-led coalition elect to strengthen and integrate the ROKN into its naval operations to such a significant extent rather than relegating it to a purely symbolic role? Active participation by the ROKN gave additional legitimacy to the coalition's operations. The young navy also clearly wanted to be part of the fight, and denying it a significant role in the UN blockade would likely have strained U.S.-ROK relations. Furthermore, the coalition's decision to invest in and work closely with the ROKN throughout the war left the ROKN better prepared to defeat future communist aggression once hostilities had ended. In addition to these reasons, however, ROKN forces contributed a number of important military strengths to coalition naval operations.

Inshore Capabilities

One key advantage the ROKN provided to coalition naval operations was its ability to fill a vital niche: small craft for inshore operations. Throughout the war, the ROKN fielded numerous light, manoeuvrable vessels with shallow drafts and low tonnage. Its many mine warfare vessels and patrol ships were light with shallow drafts. The ROKN's JMS displaced roughly 180 tons while the larger YMS displaced 320 tons with a draft of 6′1″.[14] Its PCs were also relatively light, displacing 450 tons with drafts of 10′10″.[15] This stood in sharp contrast with the larger cruisers and destroyers deployed by the United States, the United Kingdom, and other allied states in coalition operations. The U.S. Gearing-class destroyer, for instance, displaced over 3,500 tons and featured a draft of 14′3″ metres.

These larger ships were often poorly suited for blockade enforcement in Korea. The Korean littorals, particularly along the south and west coasts, are notoriously shallow, rugged, and challenging for large ships to navigate.[16] The DPRK took full advantage of this in its efforts to evade the coalition blockade, often sticking close to the coastline and operating at night to limit the blockading forces’ ability to detect and pursue their vessels.[17] Meanwhile, along the east coast, the proliferation of Soviet-supplied mines significantly raised the risks for destroyers and cruisers seeking to enforce the blockade and target DPRK fishing within 100 fathoms of the east coast.[18]

Coalition forces quickly realised that the ROKN could help counteract this problem. The UN Blockade and Escort Task Force would frequently assign ROKN small craft to partner with allied destroyers. This allowed for a logical division of labour; the ROKN would operate close to shore, detaining, inspecting, and destroying vessels, while heavier coalition ships would enforce the blockade offshore, monitor the headlands and key ports, and bombard onshore targets from a distance as necessary. The UK-led West Coast Task Element 96.53, for instance, made early use of this approach in July and August of 1950, deploying ROK PCs and YMSs close to shore and using larger craft like the cruiser HMS Kenya to resupply these small vessels and conduct bombardments of threatening enemy gun emplacements.[19] This general approach was improved further in the second year of the war when coalition forces created six island checkpoints along the Korean coast which served as forward operating bases for ROKN small craft as they operated close to shore.[20]

This approach yielded clear dividends. By the end of October 1950, the ROKN had already done considerable damage to DPRK blockade runners, capturing 43, sinking 158, and damaging 45.[21] Some of the fiercest engagements came in mid-August as the DPRK sought to resupply its forces in the south of the peninsula; in just one day, YMS 503 captured 30 vessels and sank another 15.[22] Although the tempo of DPRK efforts to run the blockade diminished considerably as the war dragged on, inshore work by the ROKN continued to yield results against DPRK craft; by April of 1951, the ROK had added 4 captured, 23 sunk, and 12 damaged to its totals.[23]

The ROKN's acquisition of four PTs in January 1952 further bolstered its contributions to inshore naval operations. Frequently, even in easy-to-navigate waters, coalition destroyers would struggle to get into firing range of enemy small craft in time before those small craft would beach and their crews escape. The ROKN's newly acquired PTs were not only small and manoeuvrable with a displacement of 50 tons, but they were also exceptionally fast, capable of speeds of 50 knots.[24] This allowed the PTs to quickly close with escaping enemy small craft and detain them before they could beach and their crews escape.[25] Furthermore, PTs provided invaluable assistance as spotters for destroyers engaged in shore bombardment. Coalition destroyers could usually only observe targets for bombardment from a considerable range (one to four miles) while PTs could rapidly move in close to shore in order to assess potential targets. The USS *Diachenko* would report that this helped distinguish between valuable targets and those which were already incapacitated, which ‘doubled the usefulness’ of the torpedo boats.[26]

Finally, ROKN small craft also played a key role in their inshore niche by supporting friendly guerillas. Throughout the conflict, the UN coalition sought to support guerilla raids to seize strategic offshore islands and to carry out sabotage, collect intelligence, and eliminate or capture enemy forces on the mainland.[27] Given their ability to navigate close to shore, ROKN vessels were usually at the forefront of efforts to land, supply, and extract raiders. Larger ships also played a key role in these efforts, often providing fire support for the guerillas on shore; but ROKN vessels often played the most dangerous role of escorting sampans full of guerillas close to the shore for insertion.[28]

Some of the most daring and successful raids took place in 1952. On 15 June, a ROKN JMS helped land guerillas near Tokhyon-san who subsequently killed 25 enemy troops, evacuated 20 civilians, and filled two junks with classified information and fuel.[29] Later that same month, raiders killed around 100 DRK troops and took five prisoners in an attack near Ch’o-do enabled by a ROKN YMS.[30] In the following month, guerillas retook Changnin-do, inflicting 121 casualties on enemy forces while suffering only 18 of their own, all while supported by a ROKN PC working alongside a Royal Navy cruiser and frigate.[31] Overall, the ROKN's ability to operate close to shore in challenging waters contributed to the success of the coalition's naval effort.

Local Knowledge

In addition to providing much-needed small craft for inshore operations, the ROKN was a critical source of local knowledge for coalition forces, providing vital intelligence throughout the war. As with any indigenous force, it possessed valuable knowledge of the area of operations, including terrain, weather, and local populations. This advantage is perhaps best illustrated by the ROKN's role in intelligence collection prior to the coalition's amphibious assault on Incheon.[32] ROKN PC 702 landed on and secured Tokchok to and Yeongheung-do near Incheon to surveil the area and gather intelligence.[33] A team of ROKN personnel under Lieutenant

Commander Ham Myong Su subsequently infiltrated Incheon, recruited several Korean informants, and began collecting information on local DPRK facilities, forces, and gun emplacements. Ultimately, ROKN personnel working with USN Lieutenant Clark helped confirm the absence of mines in Incheon approaches and gathered vital information on DPRK forces as well as the conformation of the coast.[34] This intelligence proved critical to the coalition's ability to plan and successfully execute the Incheon landing, one of the most ambitious and consequential operations of the war.

ROKN local knowledge proved useful in other ways. As native Korean speakers, ROKN personnel could interview refugees and interrogate prisoners for intelligence which proved particularly helpful when they were stationed aboard allied naval vessels. For example, CDR Clark of the USS *Cunningham*, for instance, reported that he was able to gather useful intelligence on the effectiveness of anti-fishing operations from Korean refugees interviewed by ROKN ensigns.[35] Similarly, the USS *Hollister* reported that its ROKN liaison proved helpful by extracting information from captured DPRK personnel about the existence and location of artillery around Mayang-do.[36] CDR James Dare of the USS *Douglas H. Fox* recounted that a ROK naval officer stationed aboard his vessel excelled in interrogating captured KPA personnel. Indeed, this officer once ‘convinced two prisoners, caught 30 minutes earlier, to help spot gunfire on… loading piers and warehouses.’[37] ROKN crews similarly were a frequent source of valuable information. Canadian destroyers *Athabaskan* and *Cayuga* both reported that ROKN small craft would often supply them with badly needed intelligence on KPA forces, locations, and activities along the coastline.[38]

Additionally, the frequent inshore work of ROKN small craft allowed these vessels to gain ample intelligence about adversary activities along the coast. Early in the conflict, CDR Luosey made frequent use of ROKN small craft to infiltrate behind enemy lines to gather valuable intelligence.[39] Canadian destroyers *Athabaskan* and Cayuga both reported that ROKN small craft were frequently a source of invaluable intelligence, conveying badly needed information on DPRK forces, locations, and activities along the coastline.[40] Overall, the ROKN was a critical source of intelligence and local knowledge for coalition naval operations.

Morale and Enterprise

A final advantage that ROKN forces provided throughout the conflict was their exceptional bravery, fortitude, and enterprise. While the ROKN, as discussed below, suffered from serious deficiencies in equipment and training, this did not diminish its personnel's patriotism and eagerness to defend their homeland through any means possible. The CINCPACFLT Interim Evaluation Reports often emphasise that ROKN personnel possessed ‘well-developed national pride,’ ‘willing spirit,’ ‘good morale,’ ‘adaptability,’ and eagerness to assist with naval operations.[41] This spirit meant that the ROKN was able to endure significant hardship. For instance, in October 1950, YMS 504 struck a mine near Mokpo, crippling her engine and causing five casualties. As another ROKN vessel moved to assist YMS 504, her captain, apparently unfazed, informed them that his ship would ‘soon be ready again to kill more Reds.’[42]

Similarly, the high morale of ROKN forces was often on display in PT operations. PT crews established a reputation as being ‘eager for combat missions.’[43] One British major who accompanied a ROKN PT on an inshore raid in 1953 in the face of significant shore-based fires was so impressed by the crew's apparent indifference to the danger that he requested his government award the crew with a medal. He recounted asking the ROKN lieutenant in charge of the PT how he could operate in such a dangerous environment. The lieutenant, Kim Yong-soo, reportedly responded simply: ‘This is my war. Why not?’[44] The ROK government would later award this crew with the Eulji Order of Military Merit at the suggestion of the British government.[45]

Commander Hyun Sihak, leading a PC and two YMSs stationed at Mukho in 1950, similarly displayed the extraordinary courage and daring typical of ROKN personnel. As a large DPRK force moved to seize Mukho in the evening, CDR Hyun ordered his vessels to depart into the darkness to create the illusion of a retreat. Shortly after they were out of sight, CDR Hyun had his forces turn around and assault Mukho despite being hopelessly outnumbered and outgunned. The sudden surprise attack apparently convinced the DPRK forces that a larger coalition fleet was inbound; they broke and fled the port.[46]

The spirit of the ROKN forces frequently inspired them to do whatever was necessary to ensure the success of their operations. For instance, the British Second-in-Command, Far East Station, in charge of Commonwealth operations in Korea, emphasised that the ROKN showed remarkable ‘spirit, smartness and enterprise' of the ROKN, particularly in its reconstruction of Jinhae naval base. He emphasised that while coalition forces sometimes 'laughed at their scrounging,' they quickly realised that their 'drive,' 'vision,' and 'resourcefulness' constituted an 'example which we might well follow.'[47]

Perhaps most famously of all, ROKN valour and initiative shone through in the Battle of the Korean Strait on the second day of the war. ROKN PC *Baekdusan*, commanded by Captain Choi Yong-nam, encountered a DPRK troop transport headed toward the vital port of Busan with six hundred troops embarked. Despite having never fired her three-inch guns due to a lack of ammo, the *Baekdusan* engaged the troop transport in a fierce gun battle even after its deck officer was incapacitated and its helmsman killed by enemy machine gun fire. As the PC struggled to hit her target due to dim light and rough seas, Captain Choi ordered his vessel to move closer to the troop transport despite the increased risk posed by machine gun fire.[48] When the PC's three-inch gun malfunctioned, Captain Choi pushed closer still in order to bring the 12.7 mm heavy machine guns into closer range. The *Baekdusan* suffered significant damage but continued to attack until it had crippled the enemy ship. Its persistence even in the face of numerous casualties and limited experience, ultimately sent hundreds of DPRK troops to the bottom of the West Sea and likely prevented the loss of the critical port of Busan to hostile forces.[49] Time after time, the ROKN was prepared to face whatever adversity was necessary to defend its country against communist aggression.

Key Challenges

Although the ROKN offered many advantages to coalition naval operations, it also faced a host of considerable challenges and weaknesses. Specifically, the ROKN experienced considerable challenges in respect to its equipment, training, communications, and command arrangements. At a minimum, these problems limited the ROKN's ability to contribute to some elements of coalition naval operations. At their worst, however, these difficulties cost ROKN sailors their lives and turned the ROKN into a liability for the coalition effort. While the ROKN and coalition forces undertook efforts to mitigate these weaknesses, most persisted throughout the duration of the conflict.

Equipment

While the ROKN was able to fill a vital niche in coalition operations through its inshore capabilities, its contributions to inshore operations were often hampered by inadequate, outdated, or poorly maintained equipment. Most ROKN vessels were old American and Japanese ships and boats. Most had been launched in the late 1930s or early 1940s, and many had been stripped of important systems and equipment. This meant that many ROKN vessels were missing radar and sonar sensors, refrigerated storage, key navigational and cryptographic aids, and anti-submarine warfare equipment.[50] Many of the wooden-hulled JMS ships were in particularly poor shape, and it was not until the final year of the war that coalition forces were adequately prepared to repair these ageing vessels.[51]

Poor equipment undermined ROKN contributions to coalition operations in a number of ways. Firstly, it resulted in frequent mechanical failures, which took ROKN vessels out of play and often required other coalition members to provide costly repairs. For instance, in a routine trip north to Wonsan, PC 705's mast snapped, causing a single casualty and requiring the ship to divert to Pohang.[52] Mechanical breakdowns were so frequent that the ROKN often could only keep four of its ten YMS ships operating at a time.[53] Even the most capable, modern ships acquired by the ROKN, the former U.S. PFs, ultimately 'severely taxed the facilities and ingenuity of [U.S.] repair forces.'[54]

Inadequate gear also rendered ROKN forces less combat-effective in surface engagements. In particular, the lack of radar and fire control systems on board ROKN vessels meant that its crews had to aim and fire their weapons manually. In the face of choppy weather or limited light, this significantly decreased their accuracy. On the first day of the war, YMS 509 engaged a DPRK convoy inserting hostile guerillas near Samcheok. The YMS crew reported struggling to manually aim its weapons systems because waves were rocking the hull of the ship.[55] In part due to these difficulties, the YMS was only able to sink two schooners out of the convoy before it had to retreat.[56] Similarly, the absence of radar and fire control on board the *Baekdusan* greatly complicated its ability to target and strike the DPRK troop transport at night amid limited visibility during the Battle of the Korean Strait.[57] With better equipment on board, Cpt Choi might have been able to keep his ship at a safer distance from the troop transport, resulting in fewer friendly casualties.

Most notably, a lack of advanced equipment considerably limited the ROK's ability to support allied minesweeping operations. Despite the fact that the ROKN possessed numerous YMS and JMS vessels, their minesweeping gear had already been removed. As the DPRK began to mine harbours and coastal regions, the ROKN felt this absence of minesweeping gear acutely when YMS 516 was destroyed on 18 October 1950, while patrolling west of Kalma Pando. Shortly after this incident, 12 ROKN YMS vessels travelled to Sasebo, Japan to install basic minesweeping gear and receive elementary minesweeping training.[58] Even with this additional equipment, YMS vessels lacked radar and gyrocompasses, making it difficult to use them for nighttime minesweeping when short batteries posed less of a risk. Furthermore, despite the discovery of influence mines in Korean water, ROKN minesweepers were never degaussed or given the equipment needed for influence mine sweeping.[59] Ultimately, this meant that ROKN minesweepers were never employed in any area where influence mines had been sighted. These limitations in ROKN gear were the primary reasons that ROKN minesweepers were largely confined to serving in support roles within U.S. minesweeping groups or as check sweepers.

Additionally, coalition forces often bemoaned the relatively small size of the ROKN's budding fleet. In the first two years of naval operations, CINCPACFLT Interim Evaluation Report 1 emphasised that ‘While [ROKN] vessels made a very good showing… I felt that with additional forces of the PC, SC, and PT types the results would have been proportionally greater.’[60] Similarly, CINPACFLT Interim Evaluation Report 2 indicated that ‘There is a great need for shallow draft and wooden hull ships for inshore exploration… the ROK Navy has trained crews ready to man ships when made available.’[61] Several times the ROKN found itself stretched thin trying to carry out inshore operations for coalition forces. In July and August of 1950, for instance, COMNAVFE requested the ROKN impede an anticipated surge of enemy seaborne supplies around Namhae Island. ROKN forces were already engaged all along the west coast; however, as far north as Gunsan and Haeju-man and were not able to respond; other coalition forces had to be diverted to handle Namhae instead.[62] Overall, while ROKN small craft were vital to coalition inshore operations, their contributions could have been much greater if they had higher quality equipment in greater quantities.

Training and Experience

Although ROKN personnel were, by all accounts, brave and resourceful, most were also poorly trained and inexperienced when the war began. United States assistance to ROKN training had been minimal prior to the onset of the war. ROKN midshipmen were only taught for two years at the new ROK Naval Academy, covering fundamental topics like basic seamanship and engineering. Enlisted recruits, meanwhile, were taught discipline and order but little else. Personnel could receive an education in seamanship and engine operation at service schools, but little more.[63]

After the start of the DPRK invasion, the United States scrambled to bolster training ROKN officers. U.S. advisors provided educational supplies to the ROK Naval Academy and oversaw major improvements in its curriculum. Midshipmen began to receive three years of education at the Naval Academy that covered a more comprehensive range of subjects including tactics, navigation, and communications. The United States also assigned ROKN ensigns to various coalition vessels to receive training in the field and brought many ROKN officers to the United States to attend the U.S. Naval Academy. With the assistance of the advisory group, the ROKN established a new boot camp to train new recruits in April of 1952 and created various service schools to provide specialised training in everything from firefighting to gunnery.[64] Nevertheless, these efforts only began to bear fruit in the late stages of the war. Additionally, these policies had an unfortunate impact on the quality of personnel serving onboard ROKN vessels. As the British Second-in-Command, Far East Station, remarked in August of 1952:

> Due to the long term policy, the better officers have largely been withdrawn for training duties or for courses and key jobs, and appointments such as the frigates. The first Academy graduates are only just going to sea, and they will serve for three months as ensigns under training in U.S. ships. Thus the remaining officers, part of the original emergency intake from various outside sources, such as the

> Coastguard, Merchant Service, Army, etc., who have never had a proper training and… who have no knowledge of the English language, are serving in ships at sea at the moment.[65]

Concerns about the lack of training among ROKN officers were widespread. A U.S. Navy staff study of the ROKN conducted in 1952 concluded that throughout the ROKN, ‘adherence to standard operating procedures, safety precautions and shipboard security [was] noticeably lacking… mostly [due to a] lack of training.’[66]

This limited training and experience contributed to a host of tactical and technical errors that undercut the ROKN's effectiveness throughout the war. In the Battle of the Korean Straits, for instance, technical inexperience created significant difficulties for the crew of the *Baekdusan.* As the crew fired the PC's three-inch guns repeatedly, the weapon overheated and melted the rubber spring in the trigger mechanism. Abruptly, the gun was unable to fire. This malfunction would have been easy to fix immediately for experienced gunners, but the *Baekdusan's* gunners had never fired the weapon before and were unable to resolve the malfunction. As a consequence, Captain Choi chose to move still closer to the troop transport in order to engage it with 12.7 mm fire. This, in turn, resulted in more significant damage and casualties for the *Baekdusan*.[67]

During the famous coalition evacuation of Heungnam port in December of 1950, inexperience and poor training led to a cascade of errors for the ROKN. A ROKN LST loaded with thousands of Korean refugees fouled one of her two shafts on a line and could not depart. The LST was cut free, and her engines were repaired, and almost immediately fouled both of her shafts and damaged her engines yet again. At this point, the embarked refugees desperately needed food and water and several had died of exposure.[68] The LST had to be resupplied by other nearby naval vessels. Ultimately it limped free of Heungnam on 19 September, escorted by a U.S. destroyer and another ROKN vessel tasked with seeing it to Samcheok.

Even the valiant crews of the ROKN's PT boats were not subject to criticism relating to their training and experience. In the final CINCPACFLT Interim Evaluation Report, CTF 95 opined that ‘…a motor torpedo boat is too specialised and too complicated for the ROK Navy in its present stage of development and training.’[69] Although they often performed well in inshore operations, CTF 95 contended that PT crews were far too rough on the boats, resulting in unnecessary damage and the need for frequent repairs. This concern was perhaps best illustrated by an incident on 19 September 1952 when four ROKN crewmen, cleaning gasoline strainers in the engine compartment of PT 26, were injured in an engine explosion that subsequently sunk the PT.[70] PT officers also struggled to ration their supplies efficiently while on patrol, sometimes requiring an American officer to be stationed on board to ensure fuel and ammunition were properly conserved.[71]

At times, poorly trained personnel proved unable to respond effectively to emerging crises onboard their vessels. In July of 1952, ROKN PC 701 struck a reef at night and began to founder well in range of enemy gun emplacements. When Canadian destroyer HMCS *Nootka* moved to provide support, the PC was in poor shape, with its engine room, generator room, and several other compartments already flooded. When the *Nookta*'s damage control team boarded PC 701, they quickly began jettisoning heavy items to lighten the ship, much to the chagrin of the ROKN sailors. After the ROKN personnel recognised the logic of this endeavour, they joined in, but the fact that this line of effort had yet to occur to the ship's officer was indicative of a serious gap in experience and training. Thankfully, the Canadian destroyer was able to secure and tow the PC to safety.[72]

Limited training also inhibited the ROKN's ability to field new, badly needed equipment. As highlighted above, ROKN YMS were never degaussed or given the equipment necessary for sweeping influence mines. The U.S. Commander of the Seventh Fleet ultimately concluded that although the coalition effort would benefit from the addition of ROKN YMS ships with influence mine gear, the ROKN lacked even basic training in this equipment. ‘Long study, indoctrination, and training would be required, probably in the US’ before ROKN YMS could hope to contribute meaningfully to sweeping for influence mines.[73] Ultimately, absent this training, additional equipment was effectively impracticable. Overall, while the United States and ROKN made leaps and bounds in training throughout the war, the dearth of training in the ROKN at the onset of the war proved problematic in coalition naval operations.

Communications

Communication between the ROKN and coalition forces often proved challenging. Perhaps most problematically, the partners had to confront significant language barriers. Few ROKN officers could speak English and few Americans could speak Korean. In general, this resulted in increased delays and slower conferences.[74] At times, English-speaking personnel had to be stationed on ROKN ships in order to man the radio and give manoeuvring commands to the ROKN crew.[75] ROKN liaison officers were frequently stationed on allied warships to assist with communications, but even these officers often spoke only limited English.[76] Identification and recognition of ROKN vessels also proved problematic. CTF 95 remarked at the conclusion of the conflict that ‘South Korean Units were generally poor’ in respect to recognition procedures and communications in general. This reportedly led to frequent anxiety and confusion among coalition forces.[77] At times, poor communications simply resulted in confusion and bemusement. In January of 1952, for instance, HMCS *Athabaskan* arrived at Yuk-to, which had recently been overrun by hostile guerillas. To her surprise, she found a ROKN JMS sailing inshore and bombarding the mainland. When the HMCS *Athabaskan* asked what the ROKN vessel was doing, it communicated, ‘we sentry for rescue so we are waiting,’ to the further confusion of the *Athabaskan*.[78]

On several occasions, however, miscommunication ended in fratricide. Only a few days into the war, on 29 June 1950, the USS *Juneau* detected a ROKN JMS operating near Samcheok. Unfortunately, due to a miscommunication between the ROKN and the U.S. Navy, the Juneau had been told that all ROKN vessels had moved south of the 37th parallel. Furthermore, the ROKN vessel was not flying the Korean flag. The *Juneau* opened fire on the ROKN JMS, killing eight ROKN sailors and crippling the vessel.[79]

Misinterpretation also occasionally led to collisions between friendly forces. On the night of 21 May 1952, one of the ROKN's four PFs, the ROKS *Apnok*, was escorting the ammunition ship, USS *Mount Baker*. Both ships were darkened to avoid detection. The *Mount Baker* messaged the *Apnok* about a change in course, but the *Apnok*'s commanding officer misinterpreted the message and turned into the *Mount Baker*'s path. By the time the *Apnok* realised this error, it was too late; the *Mount Baker* struck the *Apnok* amidships. The incident killed 25 ROKN sailors and injured another 21. The collision crippled the *Apnok*, one of the ROKN's largest and most capable vessels, beyond the point of repair. She was transferred to the U.S. Navy which subsequently sank her for torpedo practice.[80]

Command and Control

The ROKN encountered a number of challenges with respect to its command and control over the course of the war. Although the ROKN was placed under the authority of CDR Luosey who in turn was under the command of CTF 96 (later CTF 95), this command structure did not always function as smoothly as planned. In the opening stages of the war, the Eighth Army (EUSAK) would occasionally direct raids using ROKN forces without consulting with CTF 95 or COMNAVFE. This confused command relationship resulted in a catastrophe at Samcheok in mid-September of 1950. EUSAK organised a guerilla raid behind enemy lines near Pohang using the ROKN's single landing ship tank, LST 667. During the raid, the LST broached and left 800 guerillas stranded under artillery fire on the beach.[81] CTF 95, which had no prior knowledge of the raid, had to scramble to respond. Blockade forces were ultimately forced to dedicate 75% of their forces for five days to provide covering fire for these stranded guerillas until another LST could evacuate them.[82] Ultimately, 81 guerillas were killed or captured, another 110 were wounded, and a ROKN LST was lost.[83]

Another issue with the command and control of the ROKN emerged over the handling of Japanese fishermen in waters claimed by the ROK. During the early stages of the war, the coalition established the ‘MacArthur line’ in the waters around the Korean peninsula, rendering these waters off-limits to foreign vessels. With the signing of the Treaty of San Francisco between the United States and Japan in September 1951, however, this line was ultimately abolished in April 1952. This raised thorny issues for the ROK and Japan about the maritime boundary between the two states. ROK-Japan relations were already exceptionally poor; they had yet to conclude a peace treaty and tensions were high in light of Japan's imperial-era abuses on the Korean Peninsula. Ultimately, ROK President Rhee elected to pre-emptively declare ROK national sovereignty over a large swath of contested maritime territory in the East Sea in January 1952, prior to the expiration of the MacArthur Line. In doing so, Rhee effectively declared large swaths of the East Sea off-limits for Japanese fishermen.

Issues emerged for the command and control of ROKN forces when Japanese fishermen began to violate Rhee's declared maritime border. Despite having turned over the command of Korea's armed forces to the United Nations Command, Rhee allegedly circumvented CTF 95 and gave a direct order to CNO Son to seize Japanese fishermen in October 1952.[84] As a consequence of this, ROK maritime security forces began to detain Japanese fishermen and transport them to Busan, prompting a diplomatic incident with Japan. These fishermen were only released after a stern intervention by CTF 95. Not long afterwards, on 3 February 1953, ROK security forces killed a Japanese fishing captain and detained his crew. CTF 95 again had to reprimand Rhee, finally securing a verbal agreement that Rhee's maritime security forces would not detain Japanese fishing vessels that were not within three miles of the Korean coast. Any Japanese fishing in disputed waters was instead to be handled through CTF 95. Still, this was the source of considerable tension between Rhee and American commanders. This dispute would flare again in the immediate aftermath of the armistice when Rhee ordered four ROKN craft to expel Japanese fishing vessels, contravening CTF 95.[85]

Conclusion and Lessons Learned

These key strengths and challenges encountered by the ROKN during the Korean War offer useful insights for future coalition naval operations, particularly those operations that seek to include relatively underdeveloped local forces. Firstly, coalitions should develop an effective division of labour that can leverage the key capabilities of indigenous forces. The ROKN was able to contribute meaningfully to the coalition naval effort in large part because coalition commanders recognised its utility in inshore operations. Second, coalitions should seek to take maximum advantage of the local knowledge possessed by indigenous forces. While these forces may lack the technical know-off of more advanced and powerful naval forces, their familiarity with local language and geography can be tremendously beneficial for intelligence purposes. Without the vital intelligence provided by the ROKN, for instance, the coalition's decisive amphibious assault at Incheon would have proved far more difficult. Third, coalitions should appreciate the intangible strengths local navies often bring to bear in war. When local naval forces see their participation in coalition operations as linked to a struggle for the survival of their homelands, they will likely be among the coalition's most highly motivated participants. Despite often facing long odds with poor equipment and training, ROKN personnel repeatedly rose to whatever challenges they encountered without losing heart.

The experience of the ROKN during the Korean War also offers some cautionary lessons for future naval coalitions. Firstly, coalitions should seek to anticipate and compensate for the equipment limitations of their weaker partners. While the ROKN did the best it could with the old and outdated gear it had available, in several cases, this gear limited its ability to contribute to key operations, particularly coalition minesweeping. Second, even the best equipment may be irrelevant if the personnel employing it is untrained. A lack of experience and training in the ROKN resulted in the force becoming a liability rather than an asset in a number of important instances. Some of these difficulties might have been avoided if the United States or other allies had invested more time, effort, and resources earlier on in training ROKN personnel. Third, future naval coalitions should make every effort to minimise the kinds of errors in communication and identification that often plagued the ROKN during the Korean War. Investing in language capabilities should always be a top priority when navies anticipate participation in a multinational coalition. Last but not least, the challenges that emerged as a result of the failed landing at Samcheok and anti-Japanese fishing operations indicate the importance of ensuring unity of command in any future naval coalition.

In conclusion, the ROKN played a vital role in coalition operations during the Korean War. Despite encountering challenges in terms of its gear, training, communications, and command relations, its specialised inshore capabilities, local knowledge, and morale proved vital assets to the UN coalition fighting to repel DPRK aggression.

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5 Between Following and Leading

The Royal Navy and Coalition Operations in the Korean War

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The Korean War was a substantial and prolonged commitment for the Royal Navy (RN), involving 32 warships and 17,000 personnel.[1] Its outbreak came at a difficult time for British strategy in general and for the Navy in particular, with simultaneous operations in the even longer running Malayan emergency among a range of commitments around the globe. In 1950, the fleet was badly stretched after a number of years in which defence policy had explicitly placed a low priority on the navy. This neglect resulted in part from a pragmatic decision to pause investment until the lessons of the war could be fully digested but was more due to the elevated place of air power in strategy, combined with a sentiment in some quarters that sea power was on the wane.[2] Remarkably, at the start of the Korean War, the state of the fleet was, 'broadly similar to that existing in 1945. No new types of ship or weapon has been put into service since that date,' despite the growth of the Soviet Navy.[3] The result was that the challenges presented by this quite unexpected war, featuring cooperation with familiar and newer partners, were considerable. The Korean War provided an important opportunity to begin reconsidering the place of naval power in national strategy as well as many valuable lessons for how navies should operate.

Drawing Lessons from the War

Before the Korean War, the focus of British defence policy was strongly on the Soviet Union, seeking to deter war and making some limited preparations to fight it. The risk of such a war was seen as relatively low, though rising to 1957, and policy assumed that there would be ample warning time before it broke out. The Soviet-backed North Korean invasion of South Korea shattered these comfortable assumptions: The likelihood of general war now seemed far greater, possibly with little warning. The result was a huge increase in defence spending. Yet the focus of this largesse was on remedying the deficiencies of the armed forces for a war in Europe, not for any repeat of the Korea scenario. Limited war was seen as a possibility but remained a low priority in defence policy.

On the one hand, therefore, the Korean War was seen as having limited relevance to British strategy and defence policy at the higher levels. On the other, though, the Admiralty (the government department responsible for the RN) realised that it offered the chance to scrutinise techniques and equipment. Much attention was therefore devoted to analysing the experience, drawing out relevant lessons, and passing them back for assessment and promulgation. In the usual manner, each warship and unit produced regular ‘reports of proceedings’ that summarised activities and drew attention to key conclusions. In addition, the commander of the RN fleet operating off Korea sent a regular and remarkably frank report, which was circulated among key Admiralty departments, Navy commands at home and overseas, and the headquarters of the navies of Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.[4] Within the Admiralty, heads of department added comments, with summaries of the conclusions drawn from the discussion, and noting action undertaken in response. This process permitted prompt consideration of lessons identified and, where necessary, their rapid implementation. These dockets and other papers were then drawn upon for a full Naval Staff History of the conflict, commissioned in 1963 and completed in 1967.[5] The assessment of the Navy's experience was conducted with a clear awareness that the context was different to what might be expected in a total war, particularly with the minimal air and submarine threats. These features did not invalidate the experience but rather set some caveats to the lessons that could be drawn.[6]

The Royal Navy in the Korean War: An Overview

The British government and Chiefs of Staff were initially reluctant to commit land forces to Korea in case the invasion was the opening move of a wider war or perhaps a diversion for an attack in Europe or even Hong Kong. The natural decision was, therefore, to focus on naval power – though two army brigades would follow later, as would some Royal Air Force (RAF) flying boats for transportation and maritime patrol. The commitment would fall to the Far East Station, which in June 1950 comprised 22 warships. Its commander-in-chief (CINCFES), based in Singapore, was Admiral Sir Patrick Brind until February 1951, when he was succeeded by Vice-Admiral Sir Guy Russell. The commander at sea was Flag Officer Second in Command (FO2FE), Far East Station, Rear-Admiral (later Vice Admiral) W.G. Andrewes, until April 1951 when he was succeeded by Rear-Admiral A.L. Scott-Moncrieff who was in turn relieved in September 1952 by Rear-Admiral E.G.A. Clifford. The naval force deployed included a light fleet carrier (HMS *Triumph*), three cruisers, 15 destroyers and frigates, and several auxiliaries – the latter including the hospital ship *Maine* which was at first the only such vessel available, hence playing an important role in evacuating casualties.[7] This fleet was undermanned and in some respects ill-equipped for the role it faced; according to the British official historian, ‘most of the problems arose from the deployment of a fleet underfunded and over-committed.’[8] Nevertheless, it took on a major part in the naval campaign, in which its contribution was second only to that of the United States and far ahead of any other navy.

Initially, the RN fleet focussed on the urgent tasks of resisting the North Korean advance and stabilising the situation on land. This included transporting friendly forces into the peninsula, preventing the enemy from using the sea, and attacking enemy troops and supply routes on shore. On 3–4 July, *Triumph* teamed up with the USS *Valley Forge* for strikes against airfields, railways, and bridges in North Korea[9] – the former actually responsible for the first carrier air strike of the war, if only because she was allocated the closer targets due to the shorter range of her aircraft.

As the campaign settled into what became the routine, the U.S. Navy was given responsibility for operations off the east coast, while the west coast was entrusted to a RN task group under Andrewes. The British-led fleet was allocated, and coordinated the logistic support for, the warships contributed by the Commonwealth navies (typically three Canadian destroyers, two Australian destroyers, and two New Zealand frigates) and a Dutch destroyer or frigate. Some of these warships were attached to the multinational escort force, protecting shipping between Japan and Korea, and some operated on exchange with U.S. forces off the west coast, with U.S. warships, in turn, coming under British command in the Yellow Sea. The RN task group was therefore a multinational fleet in its own right. The typical deployment off the west coast would be a RN light carrier (relieved by the Australian light carrier *Sydney* between September 1951 and January 1952), screened by four destroyers, rotating with a USN escort carrier on roughly an 18-day cycle. This force provided cover for the inshore blockade unit, comprising an RN cruiser and four destroyers or frigates, as well as U.S. minesweepers and Republic of Korea (ROK) Navy patrol craft.[10]

Conditions off the west coast of Korea were different to those off the east coast, and in some ways more challenging, featuring shallow waters with shoals, shifting mudbanks, fast currents, many small islands, and a large tidal range. Weather conditions included heavy rain, fog, gales, and the occasional typhoon in the summer, with ice floes, sleet, snow, and blizzards in the winter. The presence of large numbers of neutral vessels added further complication, as did the proximity of Chinese air and naval bases.

The principal responsibility of the west coast task group was patrolling to enforce the blockade, preventing the enemy from using the sea to move troops or supplies. This also involved naval gunfire and air strikes against targets associated with the war at sea, such as airfields, harbour facilities, minelaying craft, and coastal artillery. Simultaneously, the force supported the campaign ashore with gunfire and air strikes against enemy forces and their supply lines (especially railways, rolling stock, and bridges), and – albeit less than the east coast forces – close support of land forces and attacks on key strategic targets.

The RN and its international elements contributed to UN amphibious operations. The key Inchon landing was conducted by the United States, but the RN took on several ‘important, if unspectacular, duties in support of the invasion,’[11] providing two cruisers (out of a total of four) for the bombardment force, as well as contributing to the forces that covered the operation, with Andrewes commanding the outer screen. The RN participated in gunfire and escort duties for the Wonsan landing and then, after the Chinese intervention, for evacuations from Chinnampo and Inchon. It conducted many amphibious raids and feints from its own warships and from specialised USN vessels.

A further role, initially suggested to the U.S. command by Andrewes, was the occupation and support of islands in the Yellow Sea as forward bases for patrol craft and for raids while denying them to the enemy. These islands had undoubted utility for the naval campaign (and their use has some relevance for modern-day ideas in the U.S. Marine Corps and the Royal Marines) but came to impose a considerable drain on naval resources, especially when they became more contested during the long armistice negotiations. Scott-Moncrieff felt that their defence fixed too many naval forces and could more economically have been achieved using more land forces, though his successor saw them as more valuable, since holding them had ‘given the enemy an ever-present threat of a flank attack from the sea.’[12]

Enemy threats to allied naval forces were limited. The North Korean navy was small at the outset and became still smaller after ‘the one real surface action of the war,’[13] on 2 July 1950 off the east coast when a USN cruiser and a RN cruiser and frigate intercepted four torpedo boats and two motor gunboats, sinking five enemy vessels. There was a small air threat (with a handful of sporadic attacks causing minimal damage and casualties) and none at all from submarines – though the real possibility of either required constant combat air and anti-submarine patrols, demanding considerable effort. The principal impediments to UN use of the sea were mines – less of a threat on the west coast than on the east – and coastal artillery.

Operating with Allies

United Nations naval operations were thoroughly multinational. RN task groups and individual warships operated under overall U.S. command and, in turn, the RN-commanded task group routinely included warships from

Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the Netherlands as well as the U.S. Navy and the ROK Navy, at times joined by French and Colombian frigates and Japanese minesweepers. Nearly all the non-U.S. forces were attached to the west coast task group, with routine exchanges between it and the U.S.-led task group on the east coast, to deepen interoperability. RN formations would take U.S. warships under command (at times including fleet carriers or battleships) and Commonwealth captains would take command of task elements including RN warships. The level of mutual trust is indicated by the fact that the screens of British and U.S. carriers routinely included escorts from each other's navies: ‘this arrangement had the advantage of exercising the destroyers of the various nationalities in working together.’[14] The frequent movement of warships between task groups and elements was accomplished seamlessly because this was simply how officers and crews were accustomed to operating. The multinational cooperation within and indeed between these formations was constant, deep, and remarkably smooth. As Andrewes put it: ‘In the report, we follow the fortunes of a number of British Commonwealth and Allied ships who formed a task group under British Command within an overall American Command. In this respect, the campaign was probably unique in that ships of seven nationalities were, with minor exceptions, operationally interchangeable, a state of affairs which was developed very quickly and harmoniously.’[15]

The Commonwealth navies shared a common ethos and training. They and the U.S. Navy were able to cooperate so closely and effectively because of deep familiarity based on previous wartime experience, particularly in the Pacific campaign where many of the British officers involved had served.[16] This foundation was built upon by postwar training and exercises – the Far East fleet had undertaken combined exercises with the U.S. Navy as recently as spring 1950. Before the outbreak of war in Korea, and during its course, work was underway elsewhere to facilitate naval interoperability within NATO, with standardised communications and tactical books produced; experience in Korea both benefitted from these ongoing relationships and further deepened them.[17]

There was inevitably some friction between services and nationalities. The U.S. Air Force occasionally had difficulties with aircraft recognition, attacking RN Seafires and Sea Furies despite the introduction of ‘Normandy’ black-and-white stripes to aid recognition. Their ship recognition was equally rusty, with reported sightings of enemy vessels often proving to be friendly warships, fishing vessels, or ships that had already been sunk. The multiple clandestine forces operated by the three U.S. services and the CIA refused for a long time to coordinate their activities with naval forces. Although there was an improvement over time, this approach not only forfeited opportunities but caused problems including friendly fire – which some of the ‘funny parties’ expressed themselves willing to risk rather than provide prior notification of their movements to allied navies, an attitude described by Scott-Moncrieff as ‘self-immolating.’[18] British commanders criticised the USN approach to communications, particularly its tendency to allow radio traffic to expand to the capacity of its own systems, straining the less capable systems of the RN and Commonwealth Navies. Andrewes noted that U.S. orders and plans were ‘superbly produced at very short notice’ but were ‘prodigious size’ and excessively detailed, often including lengthy extracts from publications held by the ships concerned.[19] A common language did not eliminate misunderstandings, with Scott-Moncrieff recording that ‘available’ referred to maintenance in the USN but to operations in the RN, while, ‘“Presently” to an American means “now,” to the British it means “later on”.’[20] RN officers were critical of UN command arrangements, particularly the lack of a proper joint headquarters (COMNAVFE being based in Japan while 8th Army and 5th Air Force had their headquarters in Korea), which they saw as hindering effective coordination among the services.[21]

Most controversially, all three flag officers holding the FO2FE position were highly critical of the style of command in the U.S. Navy. First, they saw the insistence of most senior USN commanders on exercising command at sea, rather than from ashore, as harmful. They saw it as stemming from the experience of the U.S. Navy in the central Pacific campaign, to which it had been well suited as the USN was operating essentially alone and on long supply lines. Yet in a conflict such as Korea, fought alongside other services from relatively close advanced bases, commanding at sea hit coordination with other service headquarters and with allies. The British approach, in contrast, was designed for command to be exercised from ashore, emerging from experience in Home waters and the Mediterranean, which bore a closer resemblance to Korea than did the Pacific campaign.[22] FO2FE largely based himself at Sasebo, precisely to be able to interact with his superior naval commander, leaving his chief of staff in control on the regular occasions when he visited the area of operations.[23]

Second, and more broadly, the successive British commanders described the U.S. command style as excessively rigid, with too much top-down control exercised by senior officers and too little initiative allowed to those at lower levels. Andrewes commented: ‘The Command system of the US Navy is more rigid than ours and far less discretion is given to Commanding Officers of individual ships.’ Moreover, orders had to travel all the way down the chain of command rather than the unit concerned, let alone other services, being contacted directly, so ‘vital hours are lost.’[24] His successor took a similar view, describing the U.S. command approach as ‘very rigid. Little discretion is left to the man on the spot.’[25] He had particular problems with Rear-Admiral George Dyer, commander of Task Force 95 (and hence Scott-Moncrieff's direct superior) between June 1951 and May 1952. Dyer reduced the relative autonomy that had, pragmatically, been granted to the British task group: ‘a great deal of “backseat driving” took place… any advice or question appeared to be regarded as criticism or unwillingness.’ However, even Dyer eased up with more experience and eventually adopted several suggestions originating from the British staff.[26] Dyer's successor, Rear-Admiral John Gingrich, spent more time in Sasebo and was more willing to let his task group commanders run their own operations, thereby enjoying an easier relationship with his British subordinates.[27] As the third FO2FE, Clifford, noted: ‘It is remarkable that so apparently rigid a system is so much at the mercy of personality.’[28] The issues of the location of command and its centralisation were related, with Scott-Moncrieff describing the British approach: ‘on the other hand we have come to accept the necessity for the senior officer to be ashore and accessible to other services and commands, leaving the junior commanders in the area to use their initiative.’[29] The Naval Staff History related that captains of U.S. warships attached to British command, ‘very much appreciated being allowed to exercise their own initiative, without being subjected to signals, instructions, and demands for situation reports.’[30] The Vice-Admiral on the British Joint Services Mission in Washington suggested that these views should be passed to the U.S. Chief of Naval Operations, as honest criticism was healthy and it could help with current controversies. Perhaps prudently, he received a firmly negative reply when CINCFES expressed the opinion that ‘this proposal is dynamite’ and ‘would introduce serious risk of shattering existing harmony’ between FO2FE and the local USN commanders.[31]

These disagreements over command should not be exaggerated. Firstly, RN commanders described both systems and approaches as improving over time. Second, all three FO2FE emphasised how smooth cooperation with the U.S. Navy was for most of the time. Friction was not unknown in previous campaigns, and as before it was overcome largely by good relations between key individuals. This started at the highest political levels, where Sir Oliver Franks, British Ambassador to the United States, and Dean Acheson, the Secretary of State, worked together closely, while the British and U.S. Chiefs of Staff had ‘amiable’ relations.[32] Similarly, there was close cooperation between London and the capitals of Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. Senior naval commanders in theatre cultivated a close working relationship based on mutual understanding, including Andrewes and Vice Admiral C.T. Joy (COMNAVFE from August 1949 to June 1952). Andrewes was well qualified for his position as FO2FE, having commanded cruisers in allied operations off Sicily and Salerno, and serving as chief staff officer to Commander-in-Chief Portsmouth for the Normandy landings. One of his warship commands was sent to the United States for repairs, providing experience of working with the United States, as did a tour in Australia making arrangements for the British Pacific Fleet. As Grove put it: ‘He had outstandingly good relations with the Americans, a great advantage to the United Nations task force.’[33] This was reflected in his subsequent NATO appointment as Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic, based out of Norfolk, Virginia. Another figure who was important in oiling the wheels of cooperation was Commander J.M.D. Gray, the Naval Adviser at the British Embassy in Tokyo. A few days after the outbreak of the conflict, on his own initiative, Grey offered his services to Admiral Joy, who gladly accepted and asked him to serve as the British Naval Liaison Officer at his headquarters. Against a background of typhoons, earthquakes, blizzards, a tsunami, a deeply unreliable naval car, and endless cocktail parties, Grey built a close relationship with the U.S. Navy commanders in the Far East. The trust he earned provided constant, high-level access as well as facilitating contact for other senior British officers. The Navy had better access than the other British services; Gray noted that he was the only one of the three U.K. service advisers to have been informed in advance of the plan for Inchon landings.[34] It also enjoyed more trust than other allies;

Joy confided that he was worried about the security of the French in relation to the United States having captured valuable Soviet mines and torpedoes, and whilst they had previously been allowed to see all signals, he 'felt that it would be wiser in this particular case to "keep it in the family" – as he put it' and share only with the RN.[35]

In a conflict lasting over three years, with constant and very close cooperation between so many different navies, some friction was inevitable. What is remarkable is how little there was, and how little effect it had on the ability of the navies to achieve interoperability.

Specific Naval Capabilities

Experience in Korea demonstrated once again the enormous value of naval gunfire against targets ashore. The ability to provide mobile, heavy firepower was a huge advantage in a theatre where the adversary was compelled to operate close to the coast. Several RN officers were critical of USN profligacy with ammunition alongside a predilection for so-called 'harassing fire,' aiming at a particular area without the benefit of spotting to identify specific targets, let alone correct fire. They doubted the utility of such activity, the captain of the cruiser HMS *Ceylon* commenting that it, 'is almost as harassing to the donor as to the recipient.'[36] This practice improved over time, with Clifford noting lower ammunition usage due to a reduction in the number of suitable targets and 'the gradual realisation by the Americans that the winning side is not necessarily that which throws the greatest weight of ordnance against its enemy's territory.'[37] The key lesson drawn for naval bombardment was that it was vastly more effective with proper arrangements for spotting, by trained personnel either airborne or embedded with land forces. This effort was both cross-service and multinational: 'Some truly Combined Joint Operations in this line took place with such combinations as a British Army Officer in a U.S. Air Force aircraft spotting for a British frigate and a Canadian destroyer.'[38] The RN swiftly decided that it was vital to standardise procedures for naval gunfire with the U.S. Navy and Army – indeed, it did not even matter which system was better because the advantage of using a common one outweighed minor differences between them.[39] They therefore adopted the U.S. approach, 'pending the receipt of NATO procedure.'[40]

The RN was responsible for the support of its own warships and for two Australian and two New Zealand escorts entirely, as well as for three Canadian destroyers and one Dutch destroyer 'for all except some food and clothing.'[41] The distances from the main RN bases were significant, with Hong Kong over 1,000 nautical miles away, Singapore (headquarters of Far East Station) over 3,000, and the United Kingdom some 12,000. The fleet was forward based at Sasebo in Japan, where it benefited from existing U.S. facilities as well as Japanese host nation support. An important enhancement was the arrival of an improvised headquarters ship (a refitted river steamer converted in Hong Kong and then moored in Sasebo as HMS *Ladybird*) to provide some of the space needed for Flag, administrative and logistics staff. Some accommodation was built alongside her mooring, but there was always a shortage. Andrewes noted that had they known the conflict would go on for so long, better arrangements would have been put in place earlier.[42] Indeed, the long aspiration for a proper depot ship was finally met as late as April 1953 when HMS *Tyne* arrived to replace the *Ladybird*. The maintenance aircraft carrier HMS *Unicorn* played an important role in supporting the British carriers, ferrying aircraft and supplies from Singapore. The RN task force that was in Japanese waters at the outbreak of the war included two tankers, a stores ship and a hospital ship; it used the conflict to gain further experience of replenishment at sea, notably refuelling (including at night) but also transferring ammunition and other stores, and identified several lessons about requirements for afloat support.[43] While Scott-Moncrieff was impressed with the U.S. capability, commenting, 'The American fleet train has to be seen to be believed: It is most efficient and made us green with envy,'[44] it was a major achievement for the RN to sustain its own warships and the Commonwealth and Dutch ships, while also contributing to the wider UN logistics effort.

Although enemy submarines did not intervene in the conflict, the close proximity of large numbers of Chinese and Soviet submarines meant that precautions had to be in place constantly. RN commanders were well aware of the potential impact that submarines could have, the captain of the carrier HMS *Theseus* commenting, 'There were many times when I wondered what would have happened if a few well-handled U-boats had been in the vicinity,' especially during at-sea replenishment of destroyers.[45] The RN seems to have rated the threat more highly than the United States, ensuring that skills were kept up-to-date, including the deployment of submarines to

Sasebo for training. The conflict provided a good example of the dilemmas caused in a limited conflict by potentially hostile submarines. U.S. commanders ordered that unidentified, submerged submarines should be attacked. The Admiralty, concerned at the political impact of sinking a Soviet boat, suggested the UN should issue a warning that submarines should avoid a designated war zone. Yet the U.S. Navy resisted because doing so would set an undesirable precedent of restricting the rights in international law of neutral vessels on the high seas. The RN therefore went along with the U.S. position that a submarine could be sunk in self-defence, with an unidentified submarine being submerged and in a position to attack UN forces taken as constituting offensive action.[46] Still, as an Admiralty official noted, should a Soviet submarine fail to return from patrol, there would be no proof that the allies had sunk it.[47] Stephen Prince makes the case that one such incident did occur, with the RN sinking a shadowing Soviet submarine in December 1951.[48]

The greatest hindrance to UN use of the sea was mines, which had a significant impact. Referring to the Wonsan landing, Andrewes commented: ‘In a major amphibious operation our powerful fleet lost command of the sea for ten important days through the laying of enemy mines from fishing boats.’[49] The threat from mines reinforced an existing concern, still raw from recent wartime experience. The Korean War yielded useful technical intelligence, with the RN using its close relationship with the United States to gain captured Soviet mines for inspection, including magnetic mines produced as recently as 1949; it concluded that the USSR ‘has certainly incorporated in her mine designs the best ideas from British and German mines used during the 1939–1945 war.’ Andrewes noted that British weaknesses in minesweepers and training, ‘provides food for thought… The place of minesweeping and minelaying has in the past been fairly low on our list of priorities.’[50] Still, while the mine threat was lower on the west coast than the east, no RN or Commonwealth ship was damaged by a mine.[51] Operational experience off Korea contributed to a strong emphasis on countering mines in the subsequent rearmament.[52]

Amphibious Warfare

The major amphibious landings and evacuations during the Korean War did not involve any RN amphibious shipping, mainly because such operations were a low priority in British defence policy. Andrewes commented that the ability of the U.S. Navy to launch major landings at short notice, ‘was indeed an eye opener and was only possible as a result of maintaining in commission a sufficient force of the necessary type of vessel and trained groups of personnel for all the necessary activities.’[53]

British forces played a prominent role in amphibious raids. The aims of raiding were to destroy particular targets (notably railway lines and bridges), to gain prisoners and intelligence and, in particular, by creating a fear of further major landings or smaller raids, to compel the enemy to divert and tie down his forces. A number of diversionary operations and feints were conducted to foster and take advantage of these concerns. One such operation in February 1951, under the command of Andrewes, was timed to coincide with a UN push on land. It included strikes from carriers, naval gunfire, and a feigned landing. U.S. Army intelligence suggested that it fixed two communist divisions and General Ridgeway, ‘expressed great satisfaction with the naval operations by which his armies’ flanks were secured and by which the enemy must be always looking over his shoulder.’[54] The British official historian noted of the Chinese army commander that the Inchon landing ‘had impressed him deeply,’ such that he deployed his reserve armies to secure his coastal flanks. In December 1952, expecting a U.S. landing on the west coast to break the impasse on land, he reinforced there: ‘Almost a quarter of a million troops were deployed in readiness to repel an amphibious operation which the United Nations had neither the inclination nor the means to mount. This was an achievement of occasional feints by allied warships: a strategic contribution of the first rank.’[55]

Some amphibious raids were conducted by sailors and Royal Marines from among the existing complements of RN warships. Others fell to a dedicated raiding force, 41st Independent Commando, which was specially raised in response to a direct request for Royal Marines to join a U.S. raiding campaign. It conducted 18 landings in its 18-month existence.[56] This unit in particular worked very closely and effectively with the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps; it was provided with U.S. equipment (though retaining the green beret) and logistic support, and deployed from specialised shipping and the USS *Perch*, a submarine converted for special operations.[57] Overall, raiding was seen as making a useful contribution – though there was also a feeling that 41st Independent Commando, ‘were seldom really economically or correctly employed,’[58] and its commanding officers believed that more could have been achieved with a joint headquarters for coordination across services, better intelligence and more careful planning.[59]

While Korea provided useful tactical and operational experience and lessons relating to major landings, withdrawals, and raiding, amphibious warfare continued to be a low priority for British defence policy because it was not seen as a likely requirement in the early stages of the sort of war that was envisaged.[60] In the mid-1950s, policy began to pay more attention to limited war, in which amphibious operations had much greater utility, with a consequent expansion in British capabilities but this was not a direct effect of experience in Korea.

Naval Aviation

The issue that received the greatest attention from the Admiralty was naval aviation. This was partly a reflection of the fact that the Second World War had seen this capability become unambiguously the core of the modern navy. Yet it was also because the future of the aircraft carrier was fast becoming a contentious debate in Whitehall. Its opponents in the RAF, which saw air power outside its control as a dangerous heresy as well as a worryingly successful competitor, and in the Treasury, seeking as always quick ways to cut spending, joined with some politicians who were sceptical about sea power in general and large warships in particular to lead a determined attack against the RN's fleet carriers and strike aircraft.[61]

RN light fleet carriers conducted over 23,000 sorties during the Korean War, making an enormous contribution in their own right but also underpinning the ability of other naval assets to perform their respective roles. In addition to air strikes against targets ashore, in support of the naval campaign and to assist the land forces (as well as occasionally participating in broader air campaigns, such as the June 1952 strikes against North Korean power generation), they also provided cover against the constant possibility of air and submarine attack for the whole task group, including the vulnerable inshore craft and minesweepers. They provided aerial reconnaissance that was essential for the blockade in the challenging waters off the west coast and also over the land, locating targets for themselves as well as for naval gunfire, which they then made far more accurate through the provision of spotter aircraft. While the RN carriers generally operated alone, the strikes conducted alongside the U.S. Navy, 'confirmed that British and American carriers could successfully operate together at short notice.'[62]

However, analysis of the campaign focussed as much on the limitations of British naval aviation as on its achievements. The light fleet carriers were slow, their aircraft complement was small, their single catapult restricted their launch rate and left them vulnerable to mechanical breakdowns, and they had limited space for weapon stowage and accommodation for crew, let alone a Flag staff. Moreover, the aircraft that they operated were obsolescent with limited range and weapon load compared to USN and U.S. Marine Corps aircraft; *Triumph*, the first RN carrier deployed, had the oldest marks of the Sea Fury fighter and Firefly strike aircraft – 'obsolete aircraft, the last of their kind in the first line.'[63] While *Theseus*, her replacement, had more modern versions, they were still wartime aircraft with limited speed and capacity. Some of these deficiencies could be mitigated by the way in which the carriers operated: as noted above, *Triumph* took on closer targets than *Valley Forge* because of the short range of her aircraft while on subsequent missions, she took over defensive patrols to allow her U.S. counterpart to concentrate her efforts on strike operations. The limitations of the RN task group's aircraft threatened to jeopardise its continued presence: the threat from the MIG-15 jet fighter was assessed as limited because they were expected to be confined to operations over land, but the deployment of large numbers of Il-28 jet bombers to Chinese airfields in 1952 saw senior Admiralty officials conclude that the RN carriers should be withdrawn from west coast operations. Only strong objections from FO2FE and CINCFES, based on the military utility and political value of the carriers, prevented this step.[64]

These deficiencies were not only known in advance, they were the result of deliberate government policy. The light fleet carriers had been a wartime project to meet the urgent need to take more air power to sea – the result of interwar lack of investment in the navy – by building smaller carriers that would supplement the more capable fleet carriers. The latter would handle the most demanding roles of defeating enemy warships and fighting land-based air power, while the interim escort carriers and eventually the light fleet carriers would assist them or perform less demanding roles such as trade protection.[65] Postwar, aircraft for the Fleet Air Arm again received lower priority than programmes for the RAF, including no fewer than three different heavy bombers. More capable, jet aircraft were on the way for the Fleet Air Arm – opposed at every turn by the RAF and its fellow travellers – but it would be several years before they came into service. In some ways, the light fleet carriers performed better than expected, particularly their sortie generation over prolonged periods, which was actually higher than that of the British Pacific Fleet.[66] So whereas before Korea, ‘It is no secret that the USN has regarded RN aviation as amateur and weak,’ the conflict had demonstrated impressive capability.[67] Scott-Moncrieff believed that the U.S. Navy had revised its opinion: ‘British naval aviation has perhaps been the greatest eye opener to the United States Navy.’[68] Clifford concurred, referring to ‘pilot performance and aircraft serviceability being the object of much favourable comment by United States Commanders.’[69] Nevertheless, Andrewes was clear that it was, ‘wrong to regard the single light fleet carrier as an adequate representative of naval aviation in any theatre,’ describing them as, ‘unsuitable for the fleet carrier role.’[70]

The Admiralty identified and implemented many detailed lessons regarding the operation of aircraft carriers, the design of aircraft, and the characteristics of weapons. Not least, the Navy's existing interest in helicopters was confirmed, and extended, for a wide range of roles from search and rescue to spotting mines. The most positive conclusion from the shortcomings of British naval aviation in Korea was that these were known and that modern carriers and better aircraft were on the way. The fight to retain both would be long and bitter but ultimately successful. Indeed, the Korea experience encouraged the Admiralty to push a little harder in arguing for its vision for naval aviation, with a greater emphasis on strike alongside anti-air and anti-submarine roles: ‘It may well be with the probable opening of the purse strings, the concept of an offensive carrier task force might well be revived.’[71] The focus of the Fleet Air Arm would remain different to that of the U.S. Navy, with a strong emphasis on gaining sea control (including strikes on enemy warships and targets ashore relating to the naval campaign), with directly supporting the land campaign a low priority. The rearmament programme triggered by Korea focussed on smaller warships but also included bringing forward the carriers that were under construction and increasing the intended front-line strength of naval aviation from 150 to 230 (compared to 180 in existing plans) by the end of 1952.[72]

Above all, the performance of the carriers during the conflict showcased their advantages when air bases on land were not available (because either they did not exist or had been overrun by an adversary), or because they were not in the best place – even if land bases were available, the ability of carriers to concentrate fighting power where needed, switching between west and east coasts, and closing the distance to the target thereby making air power more efficient, offered huge advantages. The conflict confirmed the limitations of the Fleet Air Arm resulting from the decision not to prioritise its modernisation, which was partially remedied. It also showed that while light fleet carriers could be useful with the right aircraft, they could not replace the more capable fleet carriers; it is noteworthy that the 1955 paper by the defence secretary that finally decided the carrier question in the navy's favour explicitly referred to the experience of Korea in this respect.[73]

Conclusion

The RN that went to war off Korea had been constrained by a national strategy that underrated sea power and gave naval forces a low priority. That it achieved so much and made such a key contribution to the multinational UN effort is testament to the versatility of the force and the quality of its people and doctrine. The broadest lesson to emerge from Korea was the utility of naval power and its flexibility across a range of contexts. As the war there ended, British defence was mired in a series of ‘radical reviews’ that sought savings primarily by downgrading the RN; yet by the end of this process, the place of naval power in national strategy was strengthened.[74] This transformation was less the result of the Korean War than of broader developments, particularly rethinking the balance between deterring and preparing to fight a war, and between ‘cold’ and ‘hot’ war. Nevertheless, there were signs of ‘warm’ or limited wars being taken more seriously; the naval campaign in Korea had some impact on this process, particularly in providing the Admiralty with support in its fight for naval aviation.

Below the level of national strategy, numerous lessons were identified and implemented. Many of these, for example, those concerning naval gunfire or afloat support, tended to reinforce conclusions drawn from the Second World War. Some deductions, notably relating to the threat presented by mines and the disruption that would have resulted from a submarine threat had it manifested, confirmed the Admiralty in taking these issues rather more seriously than their counterparts in the U.S. Navy, as was reflected in the central place of capabilities to counter these threats in the rearmament that resulted from the invasion of South Korea.

Perhaps the most durable lessons concerned the potential and mechanics of multinational cooperation in naval campaigns. The postwar years had already seen sustained attention devoted to building on the positive legacy of the Second World War; the Korean War pushed this process further along, both in terms of learning from the experience and also the heightened attention to NATO operations that was a consequence of its outbreak. This campaign underlined the range of requirements for effective coalition warfare at sea, from strong personal relationships among senior commanders, to appropriate arrangements for joint and combined command, to shared procedures for tactical activities. It also showed that the RN could hold a trusted, responsible place within a U.S.-led alliance, while at the same time acting as a 'convening power' to facilitate the contributions of smaller navies. Many of these conclusions are equally valid today.

Notes

1. Eric J. Grove, *Vanguard to Trident: British Naval Policy Since World War II* (Annapolis, MD: US Naval Institute Press, 1987), 149.
2. Tim Benbow, "The Royal Navy and Sea Power in British Strategy, 1945–55," *Historical Research* 91, no. 252 (May 2018): 375–98.
3. DO(50)58, Chiefs of Staff, "Ability of the Armed Forces to Meet an Emergency," July 21, 1950, CAB 131/9, Annex I: Royal Navy. All archival sources cited are from the National Archives, Kew.
4. These four reports provide an important source for this chapter: Flag Officer, Second-in-Command Far East Station [hereafter FO2FE], Report of Experience in Korean Operations, July–December 1950,

March 31, 1951; FO2FE, Report of Experience in Korean Operations, January–June 1951, July 27, 1951, both ADM 116/6230. FO2FE, Report of Experience in Korean Operations, July 1951–June 1952, September 15, 1952; FO2FE, Report of Experience in Korean Operations, July 1952–April 1953, July 15, 1953, both ADM 116/6231.

5. Naval Staff History BR1736(54), *British Commonwealth Naval Operations, Korea, 1950–53* (Ministry of Defence, Historical Branch (Naval), September 1967), ADM 234/1067.
6. Naval Staff History, 4.
7. Naval Staff History, 8–10.
8. Anthony Farrar-Hockley, *The British Part in the Korean War, Volume I: A Distant Obligation* (London: HMSO, 1990), 61–62. He noted the scale of the British contribution compared to that of France, which sent one warship for a single tour and one army battalion; ibid., 405.
9. Naval Staff History, 15–16.
10. See, for example, FO2FE, Report, July 1952–April 1953, Part I, Section III, 3–6.
11. Naval Staff History, 52–61.
12. FO2FE, Report, July 1951–June 1952, Part I, 16, 32–33, 40–42; Clifford to CINCFES, July 15, 1953, ADM 116/6231, 4.
13. Eric J. Grove, *Vanguard to Trident*, 138.
14. Naval Staff History, 141.
15. FO2FE/21176/1 to Admiralty, March 31, 1951, ADM 116/6230, 5.
16. Jon Robb-Webb, *The British Pacific Fleet: Experience and Legacy, 1944–50* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013) covers the experience of the British Pacific Fleet as well as postwar cooperation.
17. Corbin Williamson, *The US Navy and its Cold War Alliances, 1945–1953* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2020), especially 199, 231.
18. FO2FE, Report, July 1951–June 1952, Part II, 32.
19. FO2FE, Report, July–December 1950, Part III Section Two, 4.
20. FO2FE, Report, January–June 1951, Part II, 56.
21. FO2FE, Report, January–June 1951, Part II, 1; FO2FE, Report, July 1951–June 1952, Part II, 3.
22. FO2FE, Report, January–June 1951, 3; Part II, 42

23. Rear Admiral A.K. Scott-Moncrieff, “Naval Operations in Korean Waters,” *Journal of the Royal United Services Institution* 98, no. 590 (1953): 218–27, 218.
24. FO2FE, Report, July–December 1950, Part III Section Two, 2–3.
25. FO2FE, Report, January–June 1951, 1; Part II, 47.
26. FO2FE, Report, July 1951–June 1952, Part II, 7–8. The Naval Staff History, 209–17, is critical of Dyer for giving orders without sufficient understanding, not taking action when needed and not allowing sensible initiative. Steven Paget cites sources confirming that Scott-Moncrieff ‘found Dyer difficult as CTF 95’. See Steven Paget, *The Dynamics of Coalition Naval Warfare*: *The Special Relationship at Sea* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 46.
27. Corbin Williamson, *The US Navy and its Cold War Alliances*, 211–13.
28. FO2FE, Report, July 1952–April 1953, Part II, 2.
29. FO2FE, Report, July 1951–June 1952, Part II, 19.
30. Naval Staff History, 279–81.
31. Vice-Admiral C.C. Hughes Hallett, British Joint Services Mission (Naval Staff) to Secretary of the Admiralty, BNS 2088/51, December 23, 1952; CINC FES to Admiralty, February 10, 1953, both ADM1/27283.
32. Anthony Farrar-Hockley, *The British Part in the Korean War*, 407.
33. Eric J. Grove, “Andrewes, Sir William Gerrard,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed September 23, 2004, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/65596.
34. U.K. Naval Adviser, British Embassy Tokyo to CINCFES, NA 41/912/50, September 28, 1950, ADM116/6227.
35. U.K. Naval Adviser, British Embassy Tokyo to CINCFES, NA 41/1075/50, November 3, 1950, ADM116/6227.
36. Naval Staff History, 116; Williamson (2020), 210.
37. FO2FE, Report, July 1952–April 1953, Part II, Section III, 12.
38. FO2FE, Report, July–December 1950, Part III Section One, 16
39. FO2FE, Report, July–December 1950, Part III Section Three, 1.
40. FO2FE, Report, July 1952–April 1953, Part III, Section III, 14; Paget (2018), 51–65.
41. FO2FE, Report, July–December 1950, Part IV, Section Three, 14–23.
42. FO2FE, Report, July–December 1950, Part IV, 2–7.

43. For example, FO2FE, Report, July–December 1950, Part IV, Section Three, 14–23.
44. Rear Admiral A.K. Scott-Moncrieff, “Naval Operations in Korean Waters,” 224.
45. Naval Staff History, 134.
46. See discussions in ADM1/21863.
47. Head of Military Branch, July 31, 1950, ADM1/21863.
48. Stephen Prince, “The Contribution of the Royal Navy to the United Nations Force During the Korean War”, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.17 No.2 (June 1994), pp. 94–120.
49. FO2FE/21176/1 to Admiralty, March 31, 1951, ADM 116/6230, 9.
50. FO2FS, Report, July–December 1950, Part III Section Four, 5–6, 44, quotations 69–70.
51. Naval Staff History, 43.
52. See, for example, DO(50)56, Minister of Defence, “National Defence,” July 21, 1950, CAB 131/9.
53. FO2FE, Report, July–December 1950, Part III Section Eight, 3–5.
54. Naval Staff History, 117–19; J.A. Field, *History of United States Naval Operations in Korea* (Washington, US Government Printing Office, 1962), 353; quotation from FO2FE to CINCFES, March 8, 1951, ADM 1/22521.
55. Anthony Farrar-Hockley, *The British Part in the Korean War*, 296–97.
56. Ian Speller, *The Role of Amphibious Warfare in British Defence Policy, 1945–56* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 117–18; Naval Staff History, 43–44, 105–7, 183–85.
57. See plans and reports in ADM1/21882.
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6 Middle Power Aircraft Carriers

The Experience of the Royal Australian Navy in the Era of the Korean War

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In recent years, there has been a remarkable resurgence of interest in aircraft carriers and ship-based naval aviation, and nowhere has this been more notable than in the Indo-Pacific. Much of the attention has been focused on the developments in China's People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), but in many ways more surprising, has been the interest displayed by middle powers. After decades in which the number of navies operating aircraft carriers has consistently declined, the trend has now reversed. The Japanese are in the process of converting their *Izumo* Class 'helicopter destroyers' to carry F35B fighters, and the lead ship of the class has recently conducted the first trials with American aircraft.[1] The vessel has also conducted a high-profile deployment through the Indo-Pacific helping to signal Japanese capability and resolve.[2] India has further demonstrated its commitment to carrier-based naval aviation with the recent commissioning of its first domestically constructed aircraft carrier INS *Vikrant*. The development of ship-based naval aviation capability has also received significant attention in other Indo-Pacific middle powers. The South Korean CVX light carrier project appears to be on hold, but there is continuing interest in the capability.[3] In Australia, there have been regular debates over whether to convert one or more of the *Canberra* Class landing helicopter docks (LHD) to operate F35Bs.[4] With the recent AUKUS announcement, any further steps in this direction seem unlikely in the near future, but the interest remains. Non-regional middle powers have also shown an increasing desire to deploy their carriers to the Indo-Pacific, with the United Kingdom's Carrier Strike Group centred around the *Queen Elizabeth* undertaking a major deployment in 2021 and the French *Charles de Gaulle* set to replicate this in 2025.[5]

This renewed interest in aircraft carriers reaffirms their enduring value, not only to great powers looking to exert oceanic sea control and power projection but also to middle powers with more limited and geographically constrained aims. To understand the value proposition of aircraft carriers to middle powers in the region, and the accompanying challenges, it is useful to look back at the previous round of middle power carrier acquisition and deployment. This paper will explore the acquisition of carrier capability by Australia and its deployment as part of the UN forces during the Korean War. In doing so it will offer some different perspectives on why a middle power might want to have a carrier capability, and what issues it might face.

‘To Have a Modern Navy?’

The development of carrier aviation in the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) was a slow and challenging process. It started in 1944 when a glut of wartime construction and limitations on trained manpower led the Royal Navy (RN) to question whether the RAN could man one of its new light fleet carriers. There was enthusiasm within the navy, and the Defence Committee commented positively on the ‘strategic ubiquity’ of aircraft carriers that made them an essential part of any modern fleet.[6] The proposal failed to gain political support partly due to scepticism from the Australian government over British motives. The rapidly changing strategic situation also meant that the initial driver, namely to increase Commonwealth forces capable of being deployed against Japan, had become less pressing.

The issue did not disappear. In July 1945, the Defence Committee drew up a report on The Nature and Functions of Postwar Defence Forces in Australia. It suggested that the three primary security threats were the interruption of sea communications, sporadic raids, and invasion. Naval forces were seen as essential to all three missions, whether operating with larger partners to combat the first threat or independently in response to the second and third. At the heart of this future navy was ‘a balanced taskforce including aircraft carriers supported by a fleet train.’[7] This dual role for the RAN as both an independent regional force, and a constituent part of a larger imperial or Anglo-American fleet underpinned much of the early postwar discussion of its force design. However, as Admiral Louis Hamilton, Chief of Naval Staff & First Naval Member (CNS), explained, with its existing vessels the RAN was ‘a moribund force incapable of taking its place in an empire fleet or operating as an independent unit under modern conditions.’ The primary issue as he saw it was the lack of naval aviation.[8] Considerable pressure was placed on the Australian government highlighting the need for the country to play its role in wider imperial defence; or as Hamilton put it to the Prime Minister, Ben Chifley, Australia could not ‘back out of post-hostilities Power Politics and leave the UK to hold all the babies.’[9] Thus the acquisition of aircraft carriers was not only tied to specific roles within potential naval strategies, it was also seen as a tangible sign that Australia was willing to step up and play a significant role within the broader imperial framework.

Despite the initial setback, there was considerable confidence among naval leaders that the RAN would get its carriers, and the organisation drew up proposals setting out a fleet built around two light fleet carriers.[10] Hamilton remarked that even if this was a little optimistic ‘I think we can bank on getting a Naval Air Branch and at least one Light Fleet [carrier] eventually.’[11] In early 1946 the RAN pushed its proposal to establish an air arm, with the Secretary of the Navy Department stating bluntly that without one the navy would ‘virtually cease to exist as a first-line Naval Force.’[12] Following inconclusive discussions within both the Defence Committee and Cabinet, the Australians reached out to the Admiralty in London for advice. In September, the British government responded, offering Australia two light fleet carriers that were currently under construction. The Australian government would only pay for the work to complete and modernise the vessels, and thus, the Admiralty argued, would get two ships for the price of one.[13] Hamilton and other naval leaders were keen to press for the rapid acceptance of ‘the Admiralty's very generous offer,’ but were conscious of the political issues that had torpedoed the earlier offer of a loan.[14] Hamilton did, however, reiterate privately that ‘the principle to be decided by Cabinet at this stage is whether or not they intend to have a modern navy.’[15] The pressure was successful, and the Australian government decided in June 1947 to accept the British offer, acquire the two carriers, and establish a naval aviation branch.[16]

The overarching narrative that carrier-based aviation was essential for the RAN to remain a first-rate fighting navy was the core of the argument that persuaded the Australian government to acquire the capability. This argument remains a central tenet of the case for modern middle powers to build and operate aircraft carriers. The Australian experience of the late 1940s and early 1950s also reveals, however, how the restrictions and limitations naturally placed on middle power navies and their carrier forces can serve to undercut much of this persuasive overarching narrative.

The Australian government agreed to acquire the aircraft carriers, but the Prime Minister emphasised that the naval estimates were set at £15 million per year, and there would be no increase. Within months, however, the Admiralty in London were warning that the rapid pace of technological change, both in terms of aircraft and ship design, was pushing up the cost of the vessels.[17] Escalating costs were soon compounded by questions over what capability the relatively small vessels would have. As late as January 1948, the British Prime Minister assured his Australian counterpart that the ships ‘will, after modernisation, be capable of operating all the naval aircraft that will be in service in the middle fifties and possibly well beyond that date.’[18] Thus, when later that year the new CNS, Vice-Admiral John Collins, received a Confidential Admiralty Fleet Order stating that the light carriers would ‘be capable of operating new Trade protection type aircraft only’ he wrote to London to say that it was ‘a shattering blow.’[19] The First Sea Lord was able to reassure him that this was a mistake, and after a period of uncertainty, it became clear that a ‘short’ steam catapult could be developed for the light carriers.[20] Despite this, the rapid growth in the size, weight, and stall speed of fighter aircraft meant that it was increasingly apparent that the new RAN carriers would not be able to carry the latest generation of aircraft, most notably the proposed all-weather night fighter which would develop into the Sea Vixen. The realisation was a key factor in the British decision to also acquire the smaller Sea Venom fighter. This ensured that the Australian carriers would be able to deploy an effective modern air group if not one that could go toe-to-toe with the latest land-based fighters.[21] Collins eventually came to accept the reality of the limited capability that could be offered by the new RAN naval aviation. As he wrote to the First Sea Lord:

> Although, up to date, I have maintained that our carriers should be capable of operating the latest jet fighters, I am now beginning to have my doubts whether this ideal is practicable. In the old days we bought Australia and Canberra, two trade protection Cruisers, and accepted that they were not fitted with 15″ guns and armour. Is it not logical of us to provide now two Majestic Class Carriers and accept that they are not fleet Carriers, nor even Hermes Class? In the ANZAM [Anglo-New Zealand-Australia-Malaysia] area, their primary role would be trade protection in which AS [anti-submarine] operations play a major part and for which they are well suited. They could operate fighters that would be a match for unescorted bombers of present long range types. If our Carriers were to be employed in an area within radius of fast enemy shore-based aircraft, then our carriers would have to form part of a force with other Carriers armed with the appropriate fighters.[22]

The acceptance of the limited capability of the new RAN carriers went hand in hand with a closer evaluation of the role that the service was likely to fulfil in wartime. As Collins noted, the most likely role for the RAN in a major war was the protection of trade in the Indian Ocean and South-West Pacific, something for which the new carriers were well suited. Eric Grove has observed that ‘in no sense was the RAN being given a subsidiary carrier role’ because the ‘(d)irect defence of shipping was at this time the primary role of the entire RN carrier force.’ The only difference being that in the narrow seas such as the Mediterranean the RN fleet carriers would need to deal with large numbers of land-based aircraft.[23] Soon developments in South-East Asia saw an additional prospective role being given to the Australian carrier fleet. Fears of Chinese aggression in Indo-China led to an emphasis on the importance of ‘naval forces with as many carrier borne aircraft’ as possible being surged into the region.[24]

The idea that the RAN should act as a component of a larger allied force, whether that be imperial or Anglo-American, was an integral part of the service's outlook and formed one aspect of its postwar planning. However, there was also a clear sense that the RAN should be able to operate as an independent force, and here it is obvious that there were certain doubts about the value of naval aviation. The decision to acquire carriers had been framed around the idea that they were essential to any first-rate navy, but the limitations of the RAN's new carriers undercut elements of that. As Collins acknowledged, the RAN vessels would likely need the support of larger carriers if they were to operate close to powerful land-based aviation. More concerning still was the limited strike potential offered by the carriers. By the mid-1950s Collins’ successor, Roy Dowling, was complaining that despite taking up an ‘alarmingly high’ percentage of the naval estimates, ‘we cannot claim any real offensive power in our Fleet Air Arm.’[25] Of particular concern was the limited strike capability given the potential threat posed by Soviet surface warships such as the *Sverdlov* class cruisers, one of which was soon to be acquired by Indonesia. Dowling felt that the ‘answer of course is the tactical atomic weapon carried by Sea Venom or indeed any fighters capable of operating from the deck of a Light Fleet Carrier.’ Unsurprisingly, to modern eyes at least, this proposal did not go very far, and instead, the RAN were left to wonder whether ‘it is worthwhile planning to maintain an RAN Fleet Air Arm?’[26] Whilst this drastic decision was never taken and the RAN continued to advocate for its naval aviation arm, it highlights how the value of carrier airpower was not as clear cut as might have been assumed.

In the early debates over whether to acquire the carriers, naval aviation had been presented as an essential capability for a middle power such as Australia. The reality, however, was that Australia could never afford a large fleet carrier capable of operating the most modern fighter aircraft, or strike aircraft with sufficient payload to have the desired impact. This in turn raised questions about whether the Australian Fleet Air Arm did provide the capability necessary for the service to be considered an independent first-rate navy, capable of operating on its own. If not, then there were real doubts about whether it was worth the very substantial cost (and opportunity cost). In this respect, there are obvious parallels with modern middle power carrier aviation and the questions over the true capability of a Short Take-Off and Vertical Landing (STOVL) carrier when compared with a full Catapult Assisted Take-Off but Arrested Recovery vessel.

Carrier Diplomacy – HMAS *Sydney*'s Deployment to Korea

The Australian decision to contribute to the UN operations in Korea was taken rapidly in late June 1950, with the RAN frigate *Shoalhaven* and the destroyer *Bataan*, among the first forces placed at the disposal of UN command.[27] *Shoalhaven* was soon replaced by a second destroyer, *Waaramunga*, and these vessels played an important role both operating inshore and acting as escorts for RN and USN aircraft carriers. The importance of the ships to coalition operations was highlighted in September 1950, when Rear-Admiral William Andrewes, commanding British and Commonwealth naval forces in Korea, wrote to Collins to tell how the Australian destroyers had ‘more than pulled their weight and were most valuable to him.’ Andrewes said that ‘one of his main concerns is the shortage of destroyers’ and asked that Collins ‘bear this in mind when sending reliefs.’[28] This was embodied in the Fleet Programme drawn up in September 1950, with the Naval Board amending the proposal drawn up by the Flag Officer Commanding Australian Fleet (FOCAF) in order to retain *Warramunga* and *Bataan* in Korea beyond the expected six-month deployment.[29] Part of the rationale behind this was the pressing personnel issues facing the RAN. The service had been cut back severely following the end of the Second World War, and the entry of newly built destroyers and the working up of the new aircraft carrier HMAS *Sydney* and its air groups was placing strain on limited resources. The proposals to rotate the RAN vessels in Korea would have caused additional problems because of the requirement to provide a war complement for the ships scheduled to relieve the destroyers currently operating with the UN forces.[30]

This provided the backdrop for the first discussion of the deployment of an Australian aircraft carrier to Korea. In December 1950, the First Sea Lord, Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fraser, raised the possibility of *Sydney* being deployed to relieve one of the British light fleet carriers.[31] There were obvious issues. *Sydney* had only recently returned from the UK where it picked up its new air group and was still in the process of working it up. Furthermore, deploying the carrier to Korea would significantly exacerbate the personnel problems that had driven the decision to extend the deployments of *Warramunga* and *Bataan*. Collins highlighted these issues and the wider impact that the deployment of the RAN's only aircraft carrier would have on the service. In response, the British request was never formalised, and in early March 1951 Collins wrote to Fraser to thank him 'for your decision that Sydney should not go to Korea. I am sure that it was the right one.'[32]

In parallel to this Commonwealth discussion of naval resources, there was a far larger debate going on between Canberra and Washington over Pacific security and Australian-American relations. Since early 1950 the Australian Minister for External Affairs, Percy Spender, had been trying to negotiate a Pacific Pact which would formalise American security guarantees in Australasia. To the surprise of many this had met with a warm reception from the Truman administration, and by the beginning of 1951 what was to become the ANZUS agreement was being worked out behind closed doors.[33] Part of the willingness of the American government to consider such a proposal stemmed from the perception that Australia was a willing ally, evidenced not least by the rapid despatch of forces to Korea. By February 1951, however, the exigencies of the war meant that the United States was being forced to ask its allies for further commitments to reinforce the troops on the ground. In February, the Australian Ambassador in Washington was asked by the State Department whether Australia would be willing to commit an additional battalion to Korea, with the Americans emphasising not only the military requirements but also the necessity of maintaining the image of this being a UN as opposed to a U.S. force.[34] When they did not receive an immediate response, the Americans followed up, noting that they were 'attaching increasing importance to the matter' and wanted an answer forthwith.[35] These requests were given additional gravity by reports coming out of the State Department that senior officials did not share the enthusiasm of their political masters for the proposed Pacific Pact. They noted that other factors required more careful consideration, including public opposition to further military commitments, and 'the limited value of the proposed tri-partite pact to the United States.'[36]

Back in Canberra, the wheels of the administration were grinding, and the matter came before the Defence Committee, where the Chief of the General Staff stated that, due to personnel issues and the scope of commitments elsewhere, ‘he did not advise that Australia should increase its contribution on military grounds.’ This was fully endorsed by the committee, which concluded that there was ‘no military necessity’ to send additional ground forces, such a decision would have ‘a serious adverse effect on the Army’ and would ‘prejudice the… ability to prepare adequately to meet our probable strategic commitments in war.’[37] This blunt assessment arrived just as the arrangements for the Pacific Pact were being finalised and immediately set up a clash between the Minister of Defence and the Minister of External Affairs. In response to the conclusions of the Defence Committee, Spender penned a detailed memorandum setting out the wider situation. He started by explaining how the initial decision to send forces to Korea ‘earned us much goodwill’ in the United States, but warned that it ‘is a depreciating asset.’ He acknowledged the conclusions of the Defence Committee, but noted that the decision needed to be taken in light of factors ‘in addition to the military aspect.’ In particular, he focused on Australian-American relations, noting that ‘Australian policy is directed fundamentally towards the acceptance by the United States of responsibility to assist in the protection of Australia.’ To achieve this required the ‘deliberate cultivation of all reasonable means of demonstrating the accord of the two peoples.’ The commitment to Korea had been particularly valuable because it demonstrated a willingness to continue ‘our traditional role of placing our forces at the disposal of our allies in areas remote from our back door.’ This demonstration of a willingness to support American action in the maintenance of ‘wider international interests’ was, Spender argued, the essential quid pro quo underpinning American commitment to Australian security. He concluded that ‘while there is no military necessity for the despatch of additional ground forces to Korea, such a step would have highly important political advantages from the point of view of Australian security.’[38] The stage was set for a major cabinet showdown, but then Spender withdrew his memorandum suggesting that it was ‘not appropriate’ to deal with the question, and a holding response was sent to Washington saying that any decision would have to wait until after the forthcoming election. Precisely what provoked this volte-face is unclear, but the implication is that pressure was exerted on Spender to induce him to postpone a controversial decision.[39]

The Australian election was held on 28 April 1951 and the Liberal-Country Coalition under Robert Menzies was returned to office. The Americans, however, were not long distracted and soon returned to their theme. On 30 April, the Australian Ambassador met with senior figures from the State Department, who said that now the elections were over they hoped that the Australian government would 'give early consideration' to the question of sending additional troops to Korea.[40] The following day he was recalled to the State Department in order to 'amplify' the request, and add that whereas previously the desire had been for 'one additional battalion as a basic contribution' now the Americans wanted two.[41] Pressure was further ratcheted up by a blunt telegram from the Ambassador outlining the state of play in Washington. He noted that the U.S. administration was preoccupied with its own domestic considerations. 'If, therefore, the Australian Government is not able to make what the American Administration deems to be an adequate response… no matter how strong our domestic reasons may be, they are not likely to carry very much weight here. Indeed they will very likely not penetrate to quarters where they need to be understood the most, i.e. in Congress.' He stated that this would have 'repercussions… the most immediate being the completion and approval by the Senate of the Pacific Pact negotiations.'[42] This was, of course, precisely what Spender had feared most.

It was at this point that the prospect of *Sydney* going to Korea was raised once again. It was first floated in a letter from the First Sea Lord to Collins in April, less than a month after Collins' letter thanking Fraser for dropping the previous request. The First Sea Lord said that his carriers required relief after six months of operations, and he was unable to maintain two carriers on station in the second half of the year. For this reason, he asked Collins if 'in September it might be possible to send up *Sydney* for about 2 or 3 months operational flying if the Korea business is still going.'[43] The proposal was elevated to the political level, and its value was recognised immediately. Josiah Francis, Minister for the Navy, noted that the 'international prestige accruing to Australia from such a contribution to United Nations forces is obvious.'[44] The Defence Minister, Philip McBride concurred, remarking that it 'would be a valuable additional contribution to the Forces of the United Nations *which can be readily made.*' He pointedly went on that it ‘should be linked with the Agendum awaiting Cabinet consideration relating to the request of the United States of America for additional contributions of forces to the war in Korea.’[45] The Defence Committee, which reconsidered the entire question of additional forces for Korea prior to the issue going to Cabinet, unsurprisingly highlighted the same points, noting that whilst *Sydney* was ‘a substitute for a Royal Navy Ship it is an additional contribution by Australia.’[46] This second request for the deployment of an Australian aircraft carrier to Korea came at a better time for the RAN, with some of the specific issues raised by Collins a couple of months earlier having passed. However, the critical manning shortages remained, and there were still very good grounds to oppose the suggestion. What had really changed was the political context.

The new Minister of External Affairs, R.G. Casey, prepared a revised memorandum for Cabinet, and he viewed matters differently from his defence colleagues. He noted the possibility of sending *Sydney* to Korea saying that this was ‘a significant addition to Australia's effort,’ but still pressed for additional ground forces on the basis that ‘it would after all only be a replacement and not an addition to the overall United Nations strength.’[47] The matter came before the Cabinet on 11 May, and McBride and his defence colleagues won out. There was considerable discussion of both the military and political difficulties of sending additional troops and the dispatch of *Sydney* seemed to offer an elegant solution to the problem posed by the American pressure. The Cabinet decided that the aircraft carrier should be sent to Korea to relieve HMS *Glory* and determined that Menzies should write to Truman to inform him that no further troops would be sent whilst ‘setting out in its true perspective the Australian contribution to date in Korea.’[48] An important element of demonstrating this continued Australian commitment came from the ability to tell the President about the deployment of *Sydney*.[49]

Sydney left for Korea in August 1951 and operated primarily off the west coast of the peninsula until early 1952. By all accounts, the deployment was very successful, with the Australian carrier operating to the same high standards set by the British vessels that she relieved.[50] The primary role for the ship was providing close air support for the troops on the ground, and by the end of the deployment, the air group claimed a remarkable range of ‘kills,’ including over 200 ox carts![51] The First Sea Lord wrote to Collins in

February 1952 noting how ‘*Sydney* left Korea with a fine reputation.’[52] Shortly after the Admiralty in London began informal soundings as to whether the Australians would be willing to send a carrier for a further deployment in mid-1953.[53] This was received favourably both by the RAN and the politicians. The Defence Minister wrote to Menzies recommending that it be approved ‘both for the operational experience gained under active service conditions and for the international prestige accruing to Australia from such a contribution to the United Nations Forces.’[54] The armistice ensured that *Sydney*'s second deployment to Korea was not a combat one; however, Australia's allies remained impressed by the willingness to send the aircraft carrier to support ongoing UN operations.[55]

The request for *Sydney* to be deployed to Korea was prompted by a specific operational requirement, but decision-makers in Canberra were arguably more interested in its political than its military implications. From this perspective, the mission was primarily one of naval diplomacy, albeit conducted in wartime and targeting allies. The decision attests to the unique symbolism surrounding aircraft carriers. The vessels had replaced battleships as the ultimate arbiters of naval conflict and had also inherited their symbolic value as indicators of state power. Australian politicians believed that the deployment of an aircraft carrier would be perceived as a major step up in Australian commitment to the war. The status of this class of vessels was such that the decision would have an impact where it mattered most, namely in Washington. This proved to be the case, with President Truman writing to Menzies to thank him for the ongoing Australian contributions.[56]

It was not, however, sufficient. In August Truman returned to his theme, stressing ‘the importance which we attach to the need for replacements and for the rotation of battle-weary troops.’[57] This request was discussed by the cabinet in September, and it was agreed that Australia should double its ground forces, primarily because ‘it would help in our relations with the United States to do so.’ The political aspects of the decision were further highlighted by the desire to announce the commitment immediately as ‘there may be a ceasefire at any time in Korea, [and] we should be on record with the decision to provide additional troops.’[58] The consistent Australian focus on the political aspects of deployments and its juxtaposition with Truman's more operational focus provides a clear context for why the Australian government decided to deploy *Sydney*, and why it proved insufficient to quell American demands. Ultimately, the United States believed they needed further ground forces to fight in Korea, and no carrier deployment could replace that. This should not disguise the degree to which aircraft carriers were seen by the Australian government as a significant diplomatic weapon above and beyond their military capabilities.

Conclusion

The nature of the decision to deploy *Sydney* to Korea highlights the value of aircraft carriers as tools of statecraft. As has been seen above, the early 1950s saw the RAN begin to question whether naval aviation was worth the investment for a middle power due to the limited capabilities offered by two small aircraft carriers. This discussion was, however, focused on the operational level. The narrative around the deployment to Korea demonstrates that, when viewed from a higher strategic plane, the aircraft carriers remained a very powerful addition to Australia's national arsenal. Arguably, little has changed. As the deployment of HMS *Queen Elizabeth* to the Indo-Pacific in 2021 demonstrated, aircraft carriers remain a powerful symbol, understood by friends and potential adversaries.[59]

The renewed interest in naval aviation among middle powers, especially those in the Indo-Pacific, appears unlikely to abate in the near future given the wider geo-strategic dynamics. Many of the arguments deployed to support such acquisitions are remarkably familiar, pointing out the essential requirement for ship-based aviation in a first-rate navy, particularly one interested in operating independently. Australian experience from the early Cold War also points to the problems of such a step. Middle powers, by their very nature, lack the resources to build and operate large aircraft carriers, certainly in any number. This was the rationale behind the acquisition of British light fleet carriers by a number of smaller powers in the 1940s and 1950s and is mirrored by the focus on STOVL carriers in the twenty-first century. However, as the RAN found out, this step is very costly for the capability it offers. Small air groups, low payload and range, and second-string aircraft can all mean that the actual capability provided by a smaller aircraft carrier can be limited. These practical issues are very real, as the continued doubts over the capability of the two new British aircraft carriers attest to. The Australian Cold War experience, however, also sheds light on the wider value of these vessels. The deployment of *Sydney* to Korea is an excellent example of the significance of naval platforms on a political as opposed to purely military level. Irrespective of their operational capability, aircraft carriers have long been incredibly potent symbols of state power and influence. Their cost and complexity ensure that only a select club of states can operate them. Deploying an aircraft carrier sends a clear message to both friends and potential adversaries, something that makes them hugely powerful tools of statecraft in peace as well as in war. For this reason, it is hardly surprising that middle powers continue to covet this most expensive and technically challenging of capabilities.

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7 A Small but Significant Contribution

The Royal New Zealand Navy and the Korean War

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In 2013, Malcolm Muir Jr. wrote: ‘Although the contributions made by the many allies of the United States to the ground war are reasonably well known, less visible has been the participation of other UN navies.’[1] This has been especially true of the involvement of the Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN), which has not only been overshadowed by the contribution of the U.S. Navy (USN) but also those of the Royal Navy (RN) and the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). The number of ships involved in the Korean War does not, however, sufficiently demonstrate the substance of the RNZN's contribution. Joon-gyu Lee, former South Korean Ambassador to New Zealand, retrospectively described New Zealand's contribution to the Korean War as ‘major given the size of the country.’[2] Indeed, despite only committing two frigates on a rotational basis, New Zealand was second only to the United States (U.S.) in terms of per capita contribution to the United Nations (UN) force assembled during the Korean War.[3]

While the RNZN contribution to the overall war effort was modest, the deployment of frigates and the experience of Korean War operations was significant for New Zealand, especially in the context of the post–Second World War strategic environment. Ian McGibbon, New Zealand's official historian of the Korean War, has emphasised the ‘importance of the war in the determination of New Zealand's approach to post-war security.’[4] The conflict was also a way marker in the increasing independence of the RNZN. This chapter will examine the decision to commit frigates to Korean operations and consider the significance of the RN's influence on RNZN. It will address command and logistics arrangements and explore RNZN operations during the conflict. Finally, it will analyse the effect of the Korean War on New Zealand's strategic outlook and the development and structure of the RNZN. The heavily British-influenced RNZN emerged from the Korean War looking broadly similar to when it entered the conflict, but subtle changes in outlook set the navy on a gradual path to greater independence.

Committing the Frigates

The decision to offer the frigates for service during the Korean War was noteworthy as it represented only the fourth time that New Zealand had committed forces to a war overseas.[5] It has been asserted that New Zealand ‘leapt’ to support the Americans at the outset of the Korean War, but despite responding to a call for support from the United States, the decision was made within an inherently Commonwealth context.[6]

Following the invasion of South Korea, the United States conducted an ‘explicit recruitment process’ to assemble the coalition for the Korean War.[7] Curtis Utz has emphasised: ‘Due principally to the shared experience of the Second World War, where they had proved their military worth, and close political relations, forces from the Old Commonwealth members were considered most desirable.’[8] New Zealand was quick to respond to the call for assistance, following ‘constant consultation’ with Britain, Commonwealth nations, and the United States.[9] A review by the military leadership in New Zealand of the feasibility of sending forces to Korea on

28 June 1950 reached the conclusion that it would be possible to deploy frigates to support UN operations, with the contribution viewed as being less risky than committing ground forces and more flexible should they need to be diverted to contingencies elsewhere.[10] Subsequently, on being advised on 29 June that the RN's Far East Fleet was being committed to Korea, New Zealand's Prime Minister, Sidney Holland, offered a two-frigate contribution before the matter was even discussed amongst his cabinet.[11] Despite the impromptu nature of Holland's commitment of RNZN frigates, the contribution to the UN effort had bipartisan political support as it was considered both a necessary and noble measure.[12]

Despite Holland's enthusiasm, availability was an issue and the RNZN effectively ended up selecting the first two ships ‘almost by default,’ with a call being put out for volunteers within the navy to ensure that the crews reached wartime service levels.[13] The first frigates, HMNZ Ships *Pukaki* and *Tutira*, set sail from Auckland on 3 July. Following the initial deployment, two frigates remained on station on a rotational basis for the duration of the conflict (see Table 7.1).[14]

Table 7.1 Deployments by RNZN frigates during the Korean War

Ship	*Date departed*	*Date returned*
HMNZS *Pukaki*	3 July 1950	3 December 1950
HMNZS *Tutira*	3 July 1950	30 May 1951
HMNZS *Rotoiti*	7 October 1950	21 November 1951
HMNZS *Hawea*	2 March 1951	8 March 1952
HMNZS *Taupo*	28 September 1951	21 October 1952
HMNZS *Rotoiti*	7 January 1952	19 July 1953
HMNZS *Hawea*	4 August 1952	29 August 1953
HMNZS *Kaniere*	2 March 1953	2 March 1954

Despite being a significant national commitment, New Zealand's relationship with Britain was central to the decision to deploy the frigates and their subsequent operations and sustainment while operating in Korean waters.

Commonwealth Ties

It has been noted that naval operations during the Korean War were ‘handled on a Commonwealth basis under British command as if little had changed since the heyday of the British Empire.’[15] The connection to Britain and the Commonwealth was no more strongly felt than in New Zealand.[16] Indeed, the influence of the RN over the RNZN, in particular, was an enduring feature of the development of New Zealand's naval forces. A naval force was established in New Zealand prior to the First World War, but it was not until a June 1921 Order in Council that a separate New Zealand Division of the RN was formed and the New Zealand Naval Board was constituted.[17] As a division of the RN, the naval forces of New Zealand were placed at the Admiralty's disposal at the outbreak of the Second World War.[18] It was only during that conflict, in October 1941, that the RNZN was officially established as an independent naval force.[19] The emergence of an independent navy in New Zealand was slower than might have been anticipated, with the Admiralty having noted in October 1919: ‘The policy of forming Dominion Navies has the greatest advantage of stimulating national pride and effort in naval affairs, and it is therefore recommended that Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa should gradually build up navies of their own on the Australian model.’[20] The shift was certainly gradual, with the imperial influence on the RNZN being demonstrated by the demographics of its personnel at the outbreak of the Second World War, as less than 7% of the officers were New Zealanders and even 43% of the ratings consisted of RN loanees.[21]

The leadership and crews of the RNZN still demonstrated an ongoing and significant connection to the RN at the outset of the Korean War. The Chief of Naval Staff, Commodore F.S. Ballance, and all three members of the Naval Board were RN officers. Moreover, over 50% of non-specialist officers of the rank of Lieutenant Commander and above were RN officers on loan to the RNZN, while others had previously served in the British Navy. Although much reduced from the outset of the Second World War, even 17% of ratings were loanees or had served in the RN.[22] While it was equally true that there was a wealth of experience of working in or with the RN amongst the commanding officers and crews of other Commonwealth navies, the RNZN was the most notable example.[23] Of the eight commanding officers of the RNZN frigates deployed to Korea, four were on loan from the RN and another had transferred across.[24]

The composition of the fleet was even more indicative of the close ties with the RN. The fighting capability of the RNZN consisted of two cruisers and six Loch class frigates, which had all previously seen service in the RN. The cruisers HM Ships *Bellona* and *Black Prince* were sourced from the RN in 1946 to replace HMNZ Ships *Achilles* and *Gambia*.[25] The war surplus Loch class frigates were purchased for £1.5 million in 1948 and were to become the 'workhorses' of the RNZN.[26] Tellingly, when the frigates were purchased, it was also agreed that a sufficient number of former RN personnel would be recruited to ensure that they could be adequately manned.[27] If the RAN was considered to have functioned as an 'adjunct' of the RN, it is difficult to draw a different conclusion for the RNZN, which was even more closely tied to its British counterpart.[28]

Command and Logistics Arrangements

During the Korean War, Commonwealth ships predominantly operated on the west coast, initially as part of Task Group 96.8 and, after the Inchon landings, as elements of Task Group 95.1, both of which were commanded by the RN's Flag Officer, Second-in-Command, Far East Station.[29] This 'grouping' of Commonwealth ships, predicated on the compatibility of the navies, included RNZN ships.[30] Commodore Ballance retrospectively acknowledged: 'Our frigates have been turned over lock, stock and barrel.'[31] Integration under British command proved to be a straightforward process for the Commonwealth navies and was achieved without delay.[32] The New Zealand official history concluded that the RNZN 'experienced no difficulties in fitting in with the British command' and 'had in effect resumed a role that it had played with good effect during the Second World War-a junior partner in a naval effort directed by the RN and designed to contribute to overall allied seapower.'[33] The extensive RN experience that existed within the RNZN, the benefit of RN training, the use of British-type ships, and standardisation in a range of areas smoothed the process of integration.

The Flag Officer, Second-in-Command, Far East Station was looked on as a 'mediator' who could 'champion' Commonwealth interests, but also challenge any tasking that raised concerns, thereby offering an opportunity for the individual navies to preserve their relationships with the USN.[34] Despite observing that the RNZN 'relied on British officers to protect their interests within the wider coalition, and had no reason for complaint on this score,' McGibbon also suggested that the 'inability' of the Flag Officer, Second-in-Command, Far East Station to convince his American superior to scale back the Han River estuary demonstration left the New Zealand frigates operating in 'difficult and potentially dangerous circumstances.'[35] Therefore, while being able to rely on the Flag Officer, Second-in-Command, Far East Station to act as a buffer was generally beneficial, operations in the Han River demonstrated that New Zealand's junior role limited its influence over naval operations. Nevertheless, the RNZN's relations with the USN and, particularly, the Commonwealth navies were, overall, positive and productive.

In addition to the command arrangements, an agreement was reached that the Flag Officer, Second-in-Command, Far East Station would be responsible for the logistic support of Commonwealth naval forces, including the ships of the RNZN.[36] Standardisation with the RN through the use of British ships and equipment was fundamental to the capacity of the RNZN to obtain the necessary logistic support.[37] It was also significant in facilitating the provision of essential maintenance.[38] While it has been rightly noted that the RNZN may have 'faced potentially serious problems' if it had been reliant on U.S. logistical support, even the reliance on the British meant that they were subject to the same challenges as those encountered by the RN, such as when shortages were experienced in 4-inch shells in mid-1952 that led to measures of economy being introduced.[39] British support was crucial in sustaining RNZN operations but, as a small navy dependent on external assistance for maintenance and supply, the risk of shortfalls was beyond their control.

RNZN Operations

The Korean War was categorised as a 'warm' war by the Admiralty.[40] From an RNZN perspective, the intensity of operations increased as the conflict progressed, following an initial routine start. After joining up with the West Korea Support Group (Task Group 96.8), *Pukaki* and *Tutira* were mainly used for escorting convoys and conducting patrols.[41] Lieutenant Commander Laurence Herrick, the Commanding Officer of *Pukaki*, recorded that while routine, the early operations 'proved an excellent training for a young ship's company under war conditions.'[42] Aside from routine operations, the RNZN frigates were involved in some of the major naval operations of the early part of the conflict, but in more limited and less prestigious roles than some of their Commonwealth counterparts. During Operation Chromite, the amphibious assault at Inchon, the New Zealand frigates served as screening ships, protecting the movement of troops from Japan for the landing and safeguarding supply routes as part of Task Group 90.7.[43] During subsequent operations at Wonsan, the RNZN frigates were attached to Task Group 95.6, which was responsible for minesweeping and protection.[44]

The RNZN was delayed in joining the so-called shooting war, with it being noted that neither *Pukaki* nor *Tutira* had 'occasion to commence an engagement.'[45] In fact, the floating mine sunk by Bofors fire on 22 October was *Pukaki*'s 'only shots in anger' during her deployment, prompting Lieutenant Commander Herrick to lament that the ship had 'never…fired a shot,…smelt the enemy, seen the enemy, heard the enemy.'[46] Despite the relatively routine nature of operations, conditions in Korea were challenging and required professional ship handling. While they may not have been glamorous, the roles performed by the RNZN frigates were commendable and the crews could be proud of a job done well. The operations of the ships were described by New Zealand's Minister of Defence, T.L. MacDonald, as 'somewhat monotonous and unspectacular,' but 'essential.'[47] The operations also provided useful experience of operating with a range of multinational navies, with the Flag Officer, Second-in-Command, Far East Station writing: 'the campaign was probably unique in that ships of seven nationalities were, with minor exceptions, operationally interchangeable, a state of affairs which was developed quickly and harmoniously.'[48]

The limited nature of operations and the perception that operations were winding down prompted a decision by the New Zealand Naval Board to reduce the commitment to one frigate when *Tutira* was due to depart station, following the earlier return home of *Pukaki*, but Rear Admiral William Andrewes, then the Flag Officer, Second-in-Command, Far East

Station, requested the retention of the ship, which subsequently proved to be a prudent decision given the intensification of RNZN operations.[49] The commencement of what became known as the ‘static’ phase of the war in 1951 actually prompted an expansion of the RNZN's involvement in naval operations.[50] During 1951, the operations of RNZN ships comprised four core responsibilities: routine patrols, supervision of minesweeping, naval gunfire, and amphibious raids.[51] The RNZN frigates continued to support the blockade of the west coast, which was described in July 1951 as ‘just about 100%’ tight.[52] The RNZN also contributed to the series of so-called ‘dummy’ landings and feints conducted to create confusion about the intentions of UN forces and prompt the redeployment of Communist forces.[53] As an example, HMNZS *Hawea* took an active role in Operation Ashcan, which involved a Royal Marines force being landed to conduct a feint at Cho-do.[54] As part of a five-nation frigate force, alongside ships from Canada, Colombia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, *Hawea* provided fire support to suppress enemy movement on the approaches to the beach, with spotting being provided by aircraft from USS *Bataan*. In registering three direct hits from the 29 rounds fired at a suspected enemy observation post or artillery position prior to the landing, *Hawea* delivered the RNZN's first bombardment of the conflict.[55] It was not to be the last.

The RNZN was also engaged in the conduct of raids in 1951, which became an increasingly common feature of operations as the conflict progressed, although they were not without controversy.[56] HMNZS *Rotoiti*'s involvement in raids seems to have originated from the initiative of the ship's commanding officer, Lieutenant Commander Brian Turner. McGibbon has suggested: ‘The ambitious Turner chafed at the limitations on his ability to get to grips with the enemy. He wanted to provide traditions for the fledgling New Zealand navy. Conscious of the many wartime awards made to New Zealand soldiers for bravery, he believed that New Zealand seamen were irked by their inability “to have a crack at an enemy”.’[57] Consequently, Turner arranged for a number of his crew to participate in ‘commando training’ while the ship was docked at Kure to prepare them for conducting raids.[58]

Those skills were put to use during a raid on Sogon-ni on 11 July 1951. The beach was shelled by *Rotoiti* before an assault platoon consisting of a pair of able seamen was landed, resulting in the capture of two North Korean prisoners.[59] The raid drew praise despite the fact it had been unauthorised, being described as ‘a most enterprising little operation.’[60] A subsequent raid on Sogon-ni to destroy enemy gun positions, gather intelligence, and capture further prisoners was conducted on 26 August using marines from HMS *Ceylon* and crew members from *Rotoiti*. The party met resistance ashore, prompting naval gunfire support from *Ceylon* and *Rotoiti*. *Ceylon*'s commanding officer subsequently heralded ‘the keenness of the New Zealand ratings to take an active part’ and commended ‘their coolness under fire.’[61] Unfortunately, Able Seaman Robert Marchioni was killed during the raid, becoming the RNZN's only combat casualty of the conflict.[62] Tellingly, the Flag Officer, Second-in-Command, Far East Station, reflected: ‘Raids by *Rotoiti* had limited success in silencing enemy guns but were not deemed profitable in view of the casualties sustained and have not been repeated.’[63] *Rotoiti* did, however, direct fire support from *Ceylon* and provide naval gunfire support during a further prisoner raid conducted by the British ship four days later.[64]

RNZN frigates were also involved in the notorious Han River estuary demonstration, which was intended to drive enemy forces clear of the Kaesong area during armistice negotiations.[65] The New Zealand frigates took an active role in the bombardments despite the limitations posed by their single 4-inch gun armament.[66] The ships were involved in bombardments of a range of targets, including artillery positions, supply columns, and lines of communication.[67] Landing parties were also put ashore to direct naval gunfire. During Operation Retribution, HMNZS *Taupo* put a fire control party ashore at Kyodong-do to direct fire from an observation post approximately three miles from the ship.[68] Operations in the Han River estuary required close cooperation between the Commonwealth naval forces, as demonstrated by spotting being provided by aircraft from HMAS *Sydney* for bombardments conducted by HMS *Black Swan* and *Rotoiti*.[69] The operations were not without significant risk, as demonstrated by *Rotoiti* being straddled five times by enemy artillery fire when conducting a bombardment on 14 February 1952.[70] Despite his scepticism about both the merits and results of the operation, Rear Admiral Alan Scott-Moncrieff was adamant that the Han operations had ‘maintained the prestige of the Commonwealth navies.’[71] The sentiment was certainly true of the RNZN frigates, who were becoming much more active participants in the conflict. *Taupo*, for example, fired in excess of 16,000 4-inch rounds during her deployment.[72]

Operations became increasingly varied for the RNZN frigates as the war progressed. Despite operating predominantly on the west coast, Commonwealth ships did have the opportunity to patrol the east coast and engage in interdiction operations by bombarding roads and railways.[73] *Taupo* did three patrols between 10 November 1951 and 27 February 1952, while *Hawea* patrolled for 19 days beginning on 10 December 1951.[74] New Zealand vessels were also involved in the defence of friendly held islands, which was described as both 'a new phase of the war' and a demonstration of 'how closely the navies of the seven countries can work together.'[75] In February 1952, *Taupo*, along with two USN destroyers, was reported to have sunk fifteen North Korean junks, thereby preventing the island of Yang-do from falling into enemy hands.[76] For the final 18 months of the conflict, the RNZN predominantly operated near Paengyong-do, regularly rotating as commander of Task Unit 95.12.2.[77] Even as the conflict drew to a close, RNZN frigates remained engaged in operations and continued to put themselves at risk. *Hawea* was fortunate to escape unscathed after being straddled six times by enemy artillery on 8 May 1953.[78] *Hawea* and *Kaniere* played a key role in Operation Pandora in June 1953, which involved the evacuation of Cho-do and Sok-to.[79] Following the end of the Korean War, the RNZN commitment was reduced to a single ship on station, with another held at a state of readiness in New Zealand. The RNZN's undertaking was substantial in the context of a small navy operating at distance. In total, RNZN ships steamed 339,584 miles and fired 71,625 rounds during Korean War operations.[80]

Changing Strategic Outlook, Enduring Ties

Michael Wynd has surmised that the Korean War 'changed New Zealand's strategic focus and marked another step towards independence.'[81] That change was not immediately apparent despite significant and high-profile developments. The 1951 ANZUS Treaty entered into with Australia and the United States was perceived as providing an insurance policy for both Australia and New Zealand, which helped assuage concerns in both capitals.[82] It was seen by some as the ‘keystone’ of a reorientation in New Zealand's security outlook.[83] Rachel Harris has described ANZUS as ‘the defining formal agreement of the U.S.-NZ relationship for the latter half of the 20th Century.’[84] While the New Zealand-U.S. relationship was formalised and strengthened, it was by no means exclusive. McGibbon has asserted: ‘In the twenty years after the Second World War, New Zealanders resisted change in their international situation. Politically, economically, and culturally, they clung to the British framework, and kept the United States at arm's length.’[85] Indeed, the New Zealand government looked upon ANZUS as ‘a statement of political intent rather than the basis for extensive military cooperation.’[86] Instead, New Zealand's close military engagement with Britain continued on a similar basis to before the Korean War.

During the first months of the Korean War, a draft plan for the defence of sea communications in the ANZAM region was developed.[87] Following the cessation of the Korean War, the government committed in 1954 to providing two cruisers and two or three frigates for anti-submarine patrols and convoy escorts in the ANZAM region in the event of war.[88] In commenting on New Zealand's commitment to the ANZAM region, Prime Minister Holland declared: ‘We must earn the support of Britain by pulling our weight in the British boat.’[89] In 1955, the RNZN was committed to providing a frigate to the British Commonwealth Far East Strategic Reserve.[90] Participation in the Far East Strategic Reserve provided additional opportunities to operate and exercise with the RN and other Commonwealth navies.[91] RNZN ships operating with the Far East Strategic Reserve also engaged in Malayan Emergency and Indonesian Confrontation operations, including conducting patrols and bombardments.[92] Despite the British and Commonwealth context of those operations, this period has been identified by Christopher Pugsley as ‘the testing time during the development of an independent and unique New Zealand Navy.’[93]

The balancing act between adopting a more independent approach to naval affairs and preserving ties to the RN was encapsulated in the statement to Parliament by Minister of Defence, T.L. MacDonald, on 15 November 1951:

> Formerly, the Admiralty met New Zealand's requirements in naval matters, but it is not possible for that position to continue in face of the

> greater strain on the United Kingdom in many ways, and in the face of the growing complexity of warlike materials associated with naval requirements. We have to stand on our own feet to a great extent. That does not mean in any degree weakening our ties with the Old Country. Even though we have a Navy with a greater measure of independence it does not mean that we are weakening our connection with the Old Country. Indeed, we want to strengthen that in every way possible, but we must carry more of the burden of supplying and maintaining our own Navy and servicing our ships.[94]

Important developments, including the appointment of the first New Zealand-born RNZN Naval Board member in 1957, signified a more independent approach to naval affairs.[95] The ongoing 'British framework of operations,' however, provided a rationale for maintaining a navy that was suitably equipped and trained to operate with the RN.[96]

Shaping the RNZN's Force Structure

Although Australia and New Zealand, intertwined by the ANZAC tradition, are often grouped together, the development of the RAN and the RNZN diverged significantly in the wake of the Korean War. In Australia, the RAN became increasingly aligned with the USN. Notably, Lord Louis Mountbatten, the First Sea Lord, was notified by Vice-Admiral Roy Dowling, the Australian Chief of Naval Staff in 1955: 'The time has arrived when we must decide where we shall acquire ships and weapons – UK or USA. In the past we have depended entirely on UK…We have no wish to become Americans but there is a very strong belief in this country that the sensible action for Australians is to acquire war equipment from the USA now.'[97] During the following year, Sir Philip McBride, the Australian Minister for Defence, advised a meeting at the Pentagon on 6 June: 'I would like to stress with the greatest emphasis I can the importance of this decision that we have made; that is, that our forces should be equipped with modern equipment, standard or compatible with that of the US forces.'[98] Subsequently, following an extensive review of various ship designs and inspection tours of both Britain and the United States, the RAN announced in 1961 that the American designed and built Charles F. Adams class destroyer would be its new class of escorts.[99] The RNZN reached a similar fork in the road, but chose a different path.

The New Zealand Treasury, noting Australia's transition to favouring the United States over British equipment, pondered the nation's future sources of platform acquisitions on 21 May 1957: ‘It seems almost inevitable that sooner or later New Zealand would have no alternative but to obtain American equipment and it is a question whether that should be sooner or later. The point should certainly be carefully weighed.’[100] Unlike Australia, the decision to move away from acquiring British-type ships was very much delayed, and even when it did occur, the RNZN did not move to obtain American vessels. In 1956, New Zealand ordered two Type 12 frigates from Britain at a cost of £5.5 million, with John Singleton observing: ‘No consideration was given to ordering from a non-British source, as the RNZN was, in effect, the 11th Frigate Squadron of the Royal Navy.’[101] Compatibility with the RN, based on historical tradition, but reinforced through ongoing operations during the Malayan Emergency, contributed to the decision. Indeed, despite the preeminent role of the United States in both the Second World War in the Pacific and the Korean War, those conflicts served as a reminder of the inherent value of interoperability between the RN and the RNZN.

Cost was also a factor. The expenditure involved in acquisitions led to the decision not to replace the cruisers and even the frigate replacements proved to be controversial.[102] As the British frigates represented a relatively cheap option, especially when compared to the RAN's $90 million purchase of the first two Charles F. Adams class destroyers, there was little incentive to break with tradition.[103] Furthermore, as New Zealand was a member of the Sterling area, the order of subsequent ships offered the potential for savings in the areas of logistics, maintenance, and training, and when the British offered credit for the fourth frigate in the series, the trend of purchasing British-type ships continued.[104] It should be noted, however, that the RNZN insisted on modifications, which differentiated their ships from RN ones, and resulted in what has been described as a ‘New Zealand frigate concept.’[105] Pugsley has indicated that the eventual of arrival of those frigates in the 1960s ‘signalled the evolution of an increasingly distinctive New Zealand Navy, officered and manned by New Zealanders.’[106]

However, even when the New Zealand Army and Royal New Zealand Air Force moved to purchase American equipment, the RNZN agreed, following the 1981 Defence Review in Britain, to purchase two Leander class frigates (HM Ships *Bacchante* and *Dido*) from the RN, which represented a cheap and traditional choice.[107] The pattern of acquiring British-type ships was not broken until the 1989 decision to purchase two Anzac class frigates as part of an Australian shipbuilding programme.[108] The Anzac class ships were derived from the German Meko 200 class and were fitted with equipment from around the world, including the United Kingdom and the United States.[109] Importantly, while the selection of the ANZAC class characterised the increasing independence of the RNZN, the potential to enhance interoperability with the RAN was also a contributing factor to the decision.[110] Although the modifications to the Type 12 frigates may have made them unique to New Zealand, they indicated a variation to British designs rather than a departure from them. The path to equipment independence proved to be much longer and windier.

Conclusion

As a nation with proud maritime traditions and that, according to former Chief of the Navy, Rear Admiral John Martin, has 'always been preoccupied with maritime security,' it is perhaps surprising that the RNZN's contribution to the Korean War has received such little attention.[111] There are a number of contributing factors to the limited scholarly attention devoted to the RNZN's involvement in the conflict. Three issues stand out as particularly significant. Defence, as a whole, has not been accorded the same level of debate in New Zealand as has been the case elsewhere. Secondly, the Korean War has often been deemed the 'forgotten war' due to the comparatively limited literature focused on the conflict. Finally, the limited scale of the RNZN's contribution and the relatively unglamorous nature of the frigate's operations have led to the New Zealand effort being confined to the background of analyses of the conflict. Notably, in 2001, Scott Thomson observed: 'In over fifty years, New Zealand has never been in the game of super-planes and super-ships. We have had basic equipment, suitable add-ons for an imperial or global force.'[112] During the Korean War, the RNZN's frigates were a welcome addition to both the Commonwealth commitment to the conflict and the wider UN naval force. Moreover, the concurrent commitment of two ships represented a third of the RNZN frigate force being deployed to Korea at any given time. In the context of the fleet maintained by the RNZN, the rotating deployment of two frigates was a significant undertaking. The lack of attention to the commendable efforts of the RNZN frigate crews in the face of trying conditions is unfortunate given the meaningful contribution that they made to the UN effort. Unremarkable did not equate to unnecessary when it came to RNZN operations in Korea.

A solid foundation for integration with the RN and other Commonwealth forces was laid through broad and deep British influences, spanning from ships to personnel. RNZN frigates integrated seamlessly into the command structure and benefitted from being able to draw on British logistics resources. Dependency, however, also exposed the RNZN to risks, although they were manageable in the context of the Korean War and, notably, would have been greater had the New Zealanders been required to work directly with the U.S. command or rely on American logistic support.[113]

Like the contribution of the frigates to the outcome of the conflict, RNZN operations were not decisive in the development of New Zealand's naval policy. Experience of operating alongside the USN during the Second World War and the Korean War did not supersede relations with the RN, particularly as the RNZN continued to operate in a British framework after the Korean War. While the ANZUS Treaty superficially pointed to the importance of military relations with the United States, the RNZN continued to expect to operate with the RN and was suitably equipped with a force to do so. Nevertheless, subtle developments, including the modifications to the Type 12s, pointed to a recognition that the RNZN needed to place greater emphasis on their own unique requirements and prioritise increased independence. That transition was a marathon, rather than a sprint, but the Korean War, building on the experience of the Second World War, was a way marker in the development of a modern, independent RNZN. Ultimately, the New Zealand naval contribution was significant in every way; as a substantial undertaking for a small navy, as a valuable political and military contribution to the UN effort during the Korean War; and as a contributing factor to the gradual independence of the RNZN.

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8 The Royal Canadian Navy

Acute Operational Demands Amidst Force Structure Recapitalisation

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When the Second World War began in the fall of 1939, the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) had a mere six destroyers and two minesweepers in its fleet. By the war's end, it had become the world's third-largest navy, numbering some 400 vessels. Comprised of predominantly smaller Flower and River class corvettes, this fleet was built mainly as an escort force for the vital trans-Atlantic convoys that helped sustain and eventually liberate Europe from Nazi Germany. In the months following Japan's surrender, this massive fleet shrunk dramatically. Many of the smaller vessels were mothballed as reserve vessels, sold to other countries, or scrapped outright. The force that remained was characterised by the Canadian defence minister at the time as a small but useful fleet.[1] But in the absence of the German submarine threat, what would this little fleet be used for? And how would this purpose enable or constrain its participation in the Korean War just a few short years later?

This chapter answers these two questions by examining the force structure of the RCN between the end of the Second World War and 1954 when the last RCN vessel returned home following the Korean War armistice. It first examines the fleet that was kept during the immediate postwar period, which was denoted by a lack of clear strategic orientation. It then discusses how the RCN came to accept antisubmarine warfare (ASW) in the North Atlantic sea lanes as its primary priority and how it sought to change its force structure to meet that task more effectively. It finally discusses the RCN's contribution to Korea, focusing on the units that were deployed and the missions they undertook. It analyses this contribution within the overall context of the changed priorities of the RCN and how the RCN was nonetheless able to meet both its obligations to the United Nations in Korea and the North Atlantic ASW concerns of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). Ultimately, this chapter argues that the Korean War occurred at an opportune moment for the RCN. Had it occurred just a few short years later, the RCN's ships would have been poorly equipped to deal with the missions that were assigned to them in the war. That is not to say that everything was smooth sailing for the RCN. As a smaller navy, it encountered notable challenges from which its larger counterparts did not suffer. At the end of the day, the RCN's experience in Korea demonstrates the utility of multipurpose warships over those of single-purpose combatants.

Operational Priorities of a Smaller Navy: From Uncertain Future to Blue Water Sea Denial

At the end of the Second World War, the RCN boasted a fleet that has been described as the world's third biggest.[2] Although the corvettes that provided the mainstay of the fleet had been taken out of service soon after, the RCN of October 1945 included four Tribal-class destroyers, three prewar River-class destroyers, seven wartime River-class destroyers, one Town-class destroyer, and sixty-two River-class frigates.[3] Rounding out the RCN's sea control assets were the pair of Colony-class light cruisers HMCS *Uganda* and HMCS *Ontario*, and 65 minesweepers.[4] Much scholarship has already been written on how this dramatic transformation of the RCN from 1939's handful of ships to September 1945's 939 ships took place, so the details of that growth will not be discussed further here.[5] Although this fleet was numerically dominated by the smaller ASW escorts, wartime operations saw a substantial component of it operating in a dedicated anti-surface warfare capacity.[6] The fate of this fleet and what would replace it is vital for understanding what the RCN saw as its core military responsibility during the early Cold War.

The immediate postwar period saw the rapid divestment of most wartime assets and their personnel, with the remainder retained (either in service or reserve) in accordance with a scaled-down version of the full-spectrum fleet of carriers, cruisers, and destroyers envisioned during the war by RCN leaders like Commodore Harry DeWolf.[7] In January 1946, the RCN was comprised of the just-commissioned *Colossus*-class light aircraft carrier HMCS *Warrior*, the two light cruisers *Uganda* and *Ontario*, seven fleet destroyers, four additional Tribal-class destroyers nearing completion, and sundry reserve and training vessels.[8] Although this was half the number of carriers and destroyers requested by some wartime RCN planners, it was nonetheless ‘a good, workable little fleet,’ as Minister of National Defence for Naval Services D.C. Abbott described it in October 1945.[9] What kind of ‘work’ this little fleet would be used for was uncertain. Canada had significant compulsive seapower inputs, but their outputs were unspecified. As Marc Milner noted, ‘the only defence policy articulated by the government immediately after the war was demobilisation and economy,’ with no plans for how the RCN would be used for Canada's foreign and defence policy.[10] The lack of clear direction for the RCN's role in Canadian seapower and the associated lack of operational demand were perhaps a good thing at this time, given the navy's difficulties in retaining and recruiting personnel.[11] As part of the RCN's rapid postwar demobilisation, the number of naval personnel shrunk by 83% between April 1945 and early 1946.[12] This would continue through to 1947, and such limited numbers of personnel resulted in great difficulties in crewing the ships that remained in service with many of them relegated to training roles.[13] Thus, even had the Canadian government given a clear operational mandate to the RCN, there would likely have been insufficient personnel to crew enough ships to carry out such a mandate. It was a stark reminder that seapower inputs required not just ships, but personnel as well.

Politically, the continued existence of an RCN fleet was due in part to sovereignty concerns against the American juggernaut. The Canadians were concerned about the Americans taking defence matters into their own hands should Canada refuse to put in an adequate effort.[14] How much effort would be deemed adequate was a major point of division between Canada's wartime Prime Minister Mackenzie King and his naval minister, Angus Macdonald, who supported the RCN's desires for a two-carrier navy.[15] King's objection to an overly large RCN was also driven by his desire to keep Canada from deepening its ties to British imperialist interests in Southeast Asia.[16] A larger RCN would have to be provided by the British in terms of materiel and doctrine (especially when it came to naval aviation), while operations would almost certainly involve closer integration with the Royal Navy.[17] Indeed, had the war gone on longer, the Royal Navy was to lease two light carriers to Canada, but only on the condition that they operate alongside British forces in the Pacific.[18] With the war's end, the second carrier never came to fruition, while *Warrior* became a contentious unit in terms of both the aforementioned navy-government debate and within the navy given its high requirement for limited numbers of regular force sailors.[19] The primary function of *Warrior* and its destroyer consorts was not initially to refight the antisubmarine Battle of the North Atlantic, nor indeed any particular sea control scenario with a clearly defined opposition.[20] In this light, their role was essentially diplomatic and aimed at convincing the Americans that Canada could secure its own waters, thereby reducing the likelihood of Canada being reduced ‘in status to the level of Mexico and other Latin-American satellites.’[21] Canadian naval seapower, in this brief postwar period, can be described as predominantly aimed at influencing the Americans at a political level rather than contesting and exercising sea control against some enemy naval force. In terms of its force structure, the RCN consisted of ‘smaller versions of the fleet units employed by the large navies,’ which is consistent with how some observers have characterised smaller navies as simply miniature versions of a large navy.[22] This ‘miniature large navy’ served perhaps most usefully as a way to retain expertise and personnel until the postwar strategic vacuum could be resolved.

This strategic uncertainty would be short-lived. As the next section will demonstrate, the RCN would become a specialist in blue water ASW to the detriment of any other realm of naval warfare for the duration of the Cold War. The force structure that enabled this poses a poignant counterfactual that will be discussed later in this chapter. It suffices to say that matching military means to policy ends becomes very challenging for smaller militaries controlled by governments with ambitious globe-spanning security policies.

Becoming an ASW Sea Denial Navy

Between 1947 and the 1949 signing of the North Atlantic Treaty, several key Canadian naval officials were already convinced that the RCN's future wartime role would be to contest sea control against Soviet submarines.[23] Such a role would require new vessels able to tackle the new Soviet submarines built upon the German Type XXI design with its increased underwater endurance and speed that made it such a more challenging adversary than the Type VIIs and Type IXs that formed the core of the RCN's ASW experience.[24] However, the actual strategic scenario and questions of how and by whom would successful sea control be exercised (as opposed to contested) would not be addressed until after the formation of NATO.[25] Canada becoming a founding signatory of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949 followed by the Soviet Union's growing submarine force capable of Atlantic operations through the 1950s solidified the notion that Canada's navy would require intensified material investments and operational capability for open-ocean ASW. This meant Canadian seapower in wartime required a fleet designed for high-intensity sea control contestation to ensure NATO could use the North Atlantic seas as a means of transportation. Such a fleet did not have to exercise that control to any significant extent, however, as the actual transportation of reinforcements and supplies to Europe would be carried on non-Canadian assets.[26] While the Canadian merchant marine was the world's fourth largest coming out of the Second World War, the lack of market demand for Canadian-flagged shipping made it no longer economical to maintain a fleet that would allow Canada to independently exercise sea control for the purposes of transportation. In contrast to the wartime and enduring postwar survival of the Norwegian and Danish merchant fleets, Canada's large merchant fleet during the war was only possible due to wartime measures allocating a set percentage of Allied shipping to Canada rather than due to favourable market conditions.[27] Despite this inability to exercise sea control, Canada's geopolitical position as the western anchor of the trans-Atlantic sea and air transportation routes made it indispensable for carrying what would be known as ‘the Third Battle of the Atlantic.’[28]

For the RCN's sole aircraft carrier (initially *Warrior*, then the *Majestic*-class *Magnificent* from 1948 to 1957, and finally the *Bonaventure* from 1957 to 1970[29]), this ASW focus meant an airwing that had to shift its focus more wholly onto ASW via aircraft like the legacy Avengers and new CS2F Tracker in place of the Sea Furies and Banshee fighter-bombers.[30] For the rest of the fleet, the more advanced Soviet submarines meant existing Second World War-era ASW weapons and sensors had to be upgraded.

The most immediate development was the recommissioning and refitting of the 21 surviving River-class frigates to the *Prestonian* standard, named for the first ship to receive the refit.[31] Re-entering service between 1953 and 1958, these ships came too late to play a role in the Korean War, though that was perhaps for the best given the mismatch between their weapons and the roles the RCN would play in that war. The *Prestonian* refits replaced the Hedgehog and stern depth charges with a pair of ‘Squid’ anti-submarine mortars.[32] During the war, Squid's improved sonar integration and explosive yield achieved kill-to-attack ratios that were 33% greater than Hedgehog and 6.5 times higher than traditional depth charges.[33] Thus, even though the Squid installation on the *Prestonian*s came nearly a decade after the weapon's introduction, they were an expedient way to improve the ships’ ASW capability.

Despite the large number of ships upgraded, the *Prestonian*s contributed relatively little to Canada's potential wartime seapower and were ‘at best, a stopgap measure.’[34] Even had they been refitted in time for Korean War participation, their relatively small sizes made them unlikely to have been sent to the theatre. They spent much of their refitted lives as training ships for cadets and as test ships for new operational concepts.[35]

The *Prestonians* were not the only ships in the RCN to be modernised with increased ASW capability. The 11 larger destroyers also received new sensors and weapons as part of their conversions from DD (destroyer) to DDE (escort destroyer) configurations. While the seven Tribal class received relatively simple improvements in the form of Squid launchers replacing legacy depth charges and rear 4″ guns, the C-class *Crescent* and V-class *Algonquin* underwent much more drastic 2.5-year-long modernisations.[36] These two were converted in line with what the British called the 'Type 15 frigate,' which sought to make Second World War fast destroyer hulls into more effective anti-submarine assets.[37] The extent of these conversions meant they could not participate in the Korean War. These modifications served not only to improve the effectiveness of the pair of veteran destroyers for ASW but to also trial key design and equipment concepts being considered for the first new-built combatants of the postwar period: The *St. Laurent*-class destroyer escorts.[38] To a lesser extent, the V-class *Sioux* also helped prototyped some of the *St. Laurent*s' innovations in the form of improved habitability standards with 'bunks, cafeteria messing, modern gallery facilities, more recreation space, and so on.'[39]

RCN's Cold War Force Structure

But as the *Prestonian* and destroyer refits were only stop-gap measures, the threat of new Soviet submarines required a clean-sheet design to carry out the RCN's ASW role. The first of the postwar designs was the *St. Laurent*-class destroyer escort (DDE). Although they came just a little bit too late to participate in the Korean War, the *St. Laurent* class and their variants would form the backbone of the RCN's force structure until the 1990s. It is important to detail just how much they emphasised ASW in order to show the challenges of designing task-specific fleets in an uncertain world.

At 2800 tons full load and 112 m long, the *St. Laurent*s were larger than the 2216 tons and 92 m long *Prestonian*-class frigates, but not too much more than the wartime destroyers that formed the core of the RCN's multimission surface combatants.[40] This reflected the fairly short time between the end of the Second World War and their conception. Following the Canadian Cabinet Defence Committee's October 1948 approval for a new naval program, the seven *St. Laurent*s were laid down between 1950 and 1952 with each taking approximately five years to be built and commissioned.[41] While the initial approval was for only three of the class, the advent of the Korean War galvanised the Canadian government's Cabinet Defence Committee to approve the remaining four ships.[42] The naval program overall was in no small part made possible by the Lester B.

Pearson government's turn towards an internationalist foreign policy.[43] Canada's naval defence required vessels designed for long-endurance operations on the high seas and was consistent with being employed for internationalist objectives far away overseas.

The rapidity with which the *St. Laurent*s were ordered after the war also reflected Canada's evolution during the war as a major shipbuilding country. It now had shipyards from coast to coast that were both available and in need of sustainment in the face of reduced demand for Canadian-built merchant shipping.[44] The Canadian government had tasked the Canadian Maritime Commission (CMC) with initially advising on, then eventually full responsibility for, how to sustain the shipbuilding industry. It soon became evident that without adequate market demand for commercial shipping, Canadian shipyards could survive only on government contracts. As naval historian Marc Milner noted, ‘for domestical political and economic reasons, and for strategic purposes in the event of war with the Soviet Union, building for the RCN became the prop for the Canadian shipbuilding industry.’[45] With the CMC's power to ‘allocate’ shipbuilding work to yards without competitive bidding, much friction and delay were likely allayed, allowing contracts to be signed months before the ships’ detailed requirements had been finalised.[46] The survival of the shipbuilding industry was rarely far from the minds of those making procurement decisions, even when such decisions were seemingly driven by acute international events and military needs. For instance, the Cabinet Defence Committee's discussions following the July 1950 decision to procure the latter four *St. Laurent*s recognised the benefits this would have at the domestic level, with an August memorandum stating ‘the proposed program will give very substantial assistance to the Canadian Shipbuilding Industry.’[47] Catalysed by both the Soviet's successful first nuclear test in 1949 and the Korean War, this essentially resulted in a ‘blank cheque’ for the *St. Laurent* program, since ‘no one…knew just how much the final ships would cost.’[48]

Designed in Canada under the direction of Royal Navy Constructor Captain Rowland Baker, the *St. Laurent*s made extensive use of aluminium and heated enclosed spaces to reduce topside weight and the effects of ice accumulation outside the ship.[49] It is noteworthy that much of the ship's design requirements were iterated and finalised during the summer of 1949 alongside the imminent test of the Soviet Union's first atomic bomb in August that year.[50] While the evidence is scant regarding the degree of influence the latter may have had on the ship's final configuration, the ships' designers recognised the potential need to operate in a radioactive environment and equipped them with both a pre-wetting system to reduce radioactive materials from accumulating on the ship's exterior, as well as an interior that could be atmospherically sealed off from the outside environment.[51] This ensured the ship could operate safely in an irradiated environment while carrying out its wartime sea control function of ASW. The weapons for the latter would be via Limbo mortars and fitted-for-but-never-with homing torpedoes (options under consideration included British BIDDER, American Mk 35, or modified American Mk 32).[52] The Limbos provided a medium-range (2500 yards) ASW weapon, while the torpedoes were to offer a longer-range (5000 yards) capability to take advantage of the new longer-ranged sonars.[53] Consistent with their ASW-centric design, the *St. Laurent*s' only weapons for surface and anti-air warfare were two dual 3″/50 guns.[54] All of these design characteristics would stand in dramatic contrast to the ships that conducted themselves so capably in the Korean War.

RCN Engagement in Korea: Gunboats for a Gunner's War

Clearly, the RCN was in the midst of a relatively rapid and total transformation towards a nigh-exclusively ASW force structure. For all the speed at which the *St. Laurent* procurement proceeded, the first ships would not arrive until the 1953 end of the Korean War. This was perhaps for the best, given the lack of submarines employed by North Korea and China during the conflict despite the RCN's concern about that possibility.[55] As events turned out, the RCN's most active role during the conflict was power projection from the sea. Namely, this involved the use of naval artillery to attack targets on land. Ironically, this meant the older ships in the RCN would be more suitable than the brand-new destroyers about to enter service. The relatively small 3″ guns on the *St. Laurent*s would not have been ideal for land attack missions, but the 4″, 4.5″, and 4.7″ guns on the Second World War-legacy fleet destroyers were tried-and-true weapons for the task.[56] The larger calibre not only provided greater destructive power, they also allowed for longer engagement ranges. Specifically, while the 3″ guns could throw a 10.9 kg round out to a maximum of 13.4 km, the 4″ guns that were on the Tribal class destroyers could fire 15.9 kg rounds out to 18.2 km.[57] The weight of the shell increased exponentially, such that the 4.5″ guns on HMCS *Crusader* could fire a 25 kg shell out to 19 km.[58] The exception to this correlation between gun calibre and performance was the 4.7″ guns on HMCS *Sioux*, which apparently fired only a 23 kg shell out to 15.5 km.[59] Regardless, it was clear that the 'older' guns on the in-service destroyers outperformed those on the ASW-centric *St. Laurent*s when it came to range and explosive power.

This was particularly important in Korea, where the emphasis was on destroying infrastructure and materiel on land, occasionally in the face of enemy shore artillery that could strike back. In the first two years of the war, Canadian destroyers focused on the myriad islands, rivers, and ports on the western side of the Korean peninsula.[60] The importance of larger calibre guns was demonstrated on 26 May 1951, when HMCS *Nootka* attempted to use its 4″ guns to destroy a train bridge on the east coast at the Northern Patrol Line. Its smaller guns were insufficient to bring down the sturdy ironworks, requiring assistance from USS *Manchester*, a *Cleveland*-class light cruiser armed with 6″ guns, to finish the job.[61] Had the destroyers been armed with only 3″ guns, even fewer targets would've been destroyed throughout the course of the war. At the same time, some of the inshore and riverine bombardments required the shallow draft of the destroyers, which meant one could not simply rely on the larger cruisers to handle all of the destruction work. This was exemplified during the evacuation and demolition of Chinnampo, the port lying in the estuary of the river leading to Pyongyang. The uncharted sandbars led RCN Captain Jeffry Brock, in charge of the operation, to 'diplomatically' order the light cruiser HMS *Ceylon* to stay away while the smaller combatants completed their work in the river.[62]

The longer gun range, meanwhile, proved vital in such situations as HMCS *Crusader* successful 13,000-yard attack on two trains making their way down the east coast of North Korea on 15 April 1953.[63] With the myriad tunnels through which the trains dipped in and out of sight and in which they could shelter if alerted to attack, no opportunities could be passed-up even if the train was at the edges of the guns' practical range.

Being able to hit the locomotives in the opening salvo was no small feat given their much smaller size and higher speeds compared to naval targets. Such ‘train-busting’ actions that aimed to impede North Korean/Chinese replenishment efforts became infamous and were the dominant use of the RCN's firepower during the final year of the war.[64] It was, however, during one such action that the RCN suffered its only combat casualties during the war. On 2 October 1952, HMCS *Iroquois* had been suppressing a stretch of railway and adjacent tunnels near Songjin on the east coast. The area was guarded by a series of shore batteries, but they kept silent during the two-and-a-half hours of *Iroquois*’ bombardment. As the ship turned broadside to the coast as part of its turn out to sea, the shore batteries opened fire, with one shell successfully hitting the superstructure aft of *Iroquois’* ‘B’ (or second from the bow) 4″ gun turret. Although the gun crew recovered enough to retaliate, three of the sailors in the area did not survive. After delivering some wounded to an American tanker, *Iroquois* returned the following day to exact revenge on the guns with the assistance of an overhead spotter aircraft. Firing until the spotter could see no further targets, *Iroquois* taught the rest of the RCN the importance of treating shore batteries with greater caution.[65]

While the guns on the destroyers that served in Korea had superior range and firepower, the newer 3″ guns on the *St. Laurent*s did have one advantage. Designed for anti-aircraft work, a single 3″ gun could fire 45–50 rounds per minute, thanks to its autoloading mechanism, while the older manually operated 4″–4.7″ guns could fire only around 10–15 rounds per minute.[66] However, such a high firing rate would have been of limited use in shore bombardment. The exception might have been to provide suppressive fire for friendly troops on the ground, but that was a rare situation given the vast majority of land fighting taking place beyond the range of naval guns.[67] Even then, it would be hard to see how four or six barrels firing at 10–15 rounds per minute each would be much less cause for keeping one's head down than a higher firing rate. Indeed, the times when RCN destroyers successfully assisted South Korean or allied troops in landing operations amongst the western islands demonstrated the sufficiency of their gun armament.[68] In situations where targets were undefended or the ships were in confined waters, secondary armaments such as the 40 mm Bofors and 20 mm Oerlikons were also brought to bear to speed up the destruction process.[69]

A Small Navy on the Far Side of the World

Throughout the course of the war, four destroyers each from the Pacific and Atlantic fleets would operate in the Korean theatre.[70] This meant nearly all destroyers participated, with the exceptions being *Micmac*, *Crescent*, and *Algonquin*. *Micmac* had a damaged keel from a prior collision that relegated her to training and trial status, while the latter two were in the midst of aforementioned major upgrades as prototypes for the *St. Laurent* class design concepts.[71] While thoughts were given to sending the RCN's sole aircraft carrier, the *Majestic*-class HMCS *Magnificent*, she was deemed necessary for maintaining Canada's simultaneous commitment to the newly founded NATO.[72] Certainly, the commitment to the United Nations-led mission off Korea drew resources away from NATO priorities in Europe, which Canadian defence planners considered the dominant objective of the Cold War.[73]

But Korea did not serve only as a drain on the RCN's limited resources. It also served to provide an impetus for the Canadian political establishment to increase defence expenditures, especially for the navy. From the original April 1949 approval for only three *St. Laurents*, the fear that Korea would be merely a prelude to a greater conflict in Europe helped spur the decision to procure an additional four units of the class by the second half of 1950.[74] At a broad level, 'Canadian defence expenditures increased from $20 billion to $64 billion' between 1950 and 1953.[75] While North Korea was a distinctly different geographical threat compared to the Soviet Union, the ideological alignment between the two made the Korean War a relatively straightforward justification for Canadian politicians to increase defence spending.

Still, there were clear limitations to a relatively small navy maintaining a continuous presence on the opposite side of the world. This was perhaps best seen in the experience of the ship's crews and the logistical hurdles they faced. While the destroyers were mostly successful in staving off the external threat of enemy attacks, the long deployments led to an internal threat familiar to sailors throughout history: disorder from unsatisfactory sustenance. For instance, sailors got into physical altercations over the amount of jam one applied at breakfast. In another more severe incident, an on-duty watchman on HMCS *Cayuga* allegedly used his pistol to threaten the ship's cook while the latter was sitting on the main deck in order to elicit a greater serving of mashed potatoes.[76] Incredible though this may sound, Canada's lack of sovereign logistical support for its deployed ships meant their crews had to rely on the unenviable victualling practices of American and British supply chains.[77] This reliance on allies was even more pronounced when it came to the much-prized mail from home. In the first year of the war, mail was delayed months as they were carried courtesy of the U.S. Navy (USN) in order to save on costs. The USN, however, prioritised their own mail and cargo, resulting in Canadian mail being left in holding areas unless there was rare excess capacity on the American transports. The situation was eventually resolved by using the Royal Canadian Air Force's own aircraft, though the backlog that was already in the USN system would take longer to clear.[78]

Combined with the food situation, the sailors on board the first deployments to Korea expressed their dissatisfaction through acts of defiance just shy of mutiny. As a relatively small navy, Canada thus experienced significant challenges to its logistics that had negative consequences for the effectiveness of its sailors. Due to this and despite their many successful combat actions, the first year of the war between the summers of 1950 and 1951 saw reports describing the ships' crews as a 'dark and moody lot, given to fighting among themselves.'[79] While morale did improve in subsequent years, the 'happiest' ship, *Iroquois*, was able to accomplish this in part due to the resolved mail situation. This allowed the crew to engage in 'correspondence courses' to improve their education levels.[80] Clearly, this would not have been possible in the first year with its lengthy mail delays.

Conclusion

The RCN's experience during the Korean War demonstrates one of the challenges of matching means to ways and ends. For smaller navies, it is rare to have a fleet force structure that can have different single-purpose combatants. One can generally have either multipurpose combatants or one type of single-purpose combatants. Korea shows how Canada's fleet of multipurpose wartime destroyers was well-suited for what could be characterised as 'a gunner's war.'[81] Had the war begun later, RCN's transition towards a dedicated ASW force to fulfil its strategic role would have been less suitable. Conversely, although Korea encouraged the Canadian government to increase defence spending, it was to double down on the ASW transition rather than try to get new combatant types that would be more suitable for the shore bombardment role of the war. This would turn out to be the better decision, as the ASW role of the RCN would become a core necessity for the remaining lifespans of the ships throughout the Cold War. Canada's experience shows us the two sides of matching naval means to naval ends. While the logic of strategy indicates that force structures should follow strategic utility, the long construction times of warships make it important to not respond too quickly or too intensely to meet the requirements of acute short-duration events.

For scholars of seapower, the RCN's situation as a small navy during the Korean War serves as a useful reminder of the challenges in rating the capabilities of navies based on size. Was Canada a coastal defence navy, as one might expect based on it having fewer than a dozen deployable surface combatants at the time? Or was it a global force projection navy, given its ability to maintain a continuous deployment of three destroyers to the opposite side of the world for several years? In any case, the Korean War did not mark a one-off interest in expeditionary operations for the RCN. While the Cold War saw the RCN focus on its North Atlantic and European ASW missions, the decades afterwards saw the RCN return to and expand upon the expeditionary posture pioneered in Korea. In the years following the 9/11 attacks, the RCN maintained a nearly continuous presence from Europe to the Indian Ocean to the Western Pacific. It has been able to accomplish this with a surface combatant fleet that is nearly the same in numbers as it had during the Korean War: 12 *Halifax* class general-purpose frigates. Still, there is a major difference between the peacetime constabulary tasks of today's fleet versus the wartime military missions during Korea. As Edward Meyers, who served on board HMCS *Cayuga* in Korea, noted: ‘For those who served [in Korea], it became a sore point that Canada's leaders…never saw the war as being anything other than a police action. To those who served in *Iroquois* the shells that struck down their shipmates were instruments of war.’[82]

Notes

1. Marc Milner, *Canada's Navy: The First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 160–63.
2. David Zimmerman, *Maritime Command Pacific: The Royal Canadian Navy's West Coast Fleet in the Early Cold War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 9; Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 177; S. Mathwin Davis, "The 'St Laurent' Decision: Genesis of a Canadian Fleet," in *The RCN in Transition, 1910–1985*, ed. W.A.B. Douglas (Vancouver: The University of British Columbia Press, 1988), 188.
3. Sandy McClearn, "Tribal class," *Haze Gray and Underway*, 2006, http://www.hazegray.org/navhist/canada/postwar/tribww2/; Sandy McClearn, "River Class destroyer," 2006, http://www.hazegray.org/navhist/canada/ww2/riverdes/; Sandy McClearn, "River Class frigate," 2007, http://www.hazegray.org/navhist/canada/ww2/riverfri/.
4. Sandy McClearn, "The Canadian Navy of Yesterday & Today: World War II Canadian Ship Listing 1931–1945," *Haze Gray and Underway*, 2006, http://www.hazegray.org/navhist/canada/ww2/.
5. Elizabeth B. Elliot-Meisel, "Arctic Focus: The Royal Canadian Navy in Arctic Waters, 1946–1949," *The Northern Mariner* 9, no. 2 (1999): 25. For discussions of the RCN's wartime growth, see references in Footnote 7.
6. Michael J. Whitby, "Fooling around the French Coast: RCN Tribal-Class Destroyers in Action, April 1944," *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (Winter 1989): 54–56; Peter A. Dixon, ""I Will Never Forget the Sound of those Engines Going Away": A Re-Examination of the Sinking of HMCS *Athabaskan*, 29 April 1944," *Canadian Military History* 5, no. 1 (1996): 16–25.
7. Zimmerman, *Maritime Command Pacific*, 12–15; Davis, "The 'St Laurent' Decision", 189–90.
8. Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 162–63.
9. Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 160–63.
10. Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 164.
11. Zimmerman, *Maritime Command Pacific*, 15.
12. Zimmerman, *Maritime Command Pacific*, 15.
13. Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 166.
14. Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 158.
15. Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 158–59.

16. Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 159.
17. Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 159–60.
18. Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 160.
19. Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 164–65. Regular force members are analogous to active duty members in other countries and contrasted with reservists.
20. Davis, "The 'St Laurent' Decision," 193.
21. Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 158.
22. Elliot-Meisel, "Arctic Focus: The Royal Canadian Navy in Arctic Waters," 123.
23. Davis, "The 'St Laurent' Decision," 195–97.
24. Of the 15 German submarines sunk by the RCN during the Second World War, five were Type IX while the rest were Type VIIC or Type VIIA: Guðmundur Helgason, "U-boats sunk by the Canadian Navy," *UBoat.net*, 2021, https://uboat.net/allies/ships/rcn_victories.htm. The Zulu class was the first postwar Soviet submarine to significantly incorporate lessons learned from the German Type XXI, making them the likely candidates to operate in the mid- and western Atlantic versus the much more numerous Whiskey class: Norman Polmar and Jurrien S. Noot, *Submarines of the Russian and Soviet Navies: 1718–1990* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 136–38, 148–49, 283.
25. Davis, "The 'St Laurent' Decision," 195–97.
26. Eric Grove and Geoffrey Till, "Anglo-American Maritime Strategy in the Era of Massive Retaliation, 1945–60," in *Maritime Strategy and the Balance of Power: Britain and American in the Twentieth Century*, eds. John B. Hattendorf and Robert S. Jordan (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd: 1989), 278; Isabel Campbell, "Canadian Insights into NATO Maritime Strategy, 1949–70: The Role of National and Service Interests," *The Northern Mariner* 15, no. 3 (July 2015): 252.
27. Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 166–67.
28. James Foggo III and Alarik Fritz, "The Fourth Battle of the Atlantic," *USNI Proceedings* 142, no. 6 (June 2016): 1360.
29. The ASW capability of the ship was also augmented in 1965 by the introduction of the Sea King helicopters. J. Allan Snowie, *The Bonnie: HMCS Bonaventure* (Erin, ON: The Boston Mills Press, 1987), 185, 305, 331–32.

30. Campbell, "Canadian Insights into NATO Maritime Strategy," 248, 252; Snowie, *The Bonnie*, 71, 155, 183. While the Banshees and Trackers replaced the Sea Furies and Avengers, respectively, the Banshees would be removed in 1962 without replacement.
31. Ken Macpherson, *Frigates of the Royal Canadian Navy 1943–1974* (St. Catharines, ON: Vanwell Publishing Limited, 1989), 7, 77; Roger G. Steed, *Canadian Warships Since 1956* (St. Catharines, ON: Vanwell Publishing Limited, 1999), 24, 42.
32. Macpherson, *Frigates of the Royal Canadian Navy*, 15, 57.
33. DiGiulian, "United Kingdom/Britain: ASW Weapons." Between July 1944 and May 1945, ships equipped with two Squids had a 41% kill-to-attack ratio, while Hedgehogs were at 30% and traditional depth charges had only 6.3%. Data before this period is excluded as dual-Squids had not yet been used in combat. This also helps account for tactical maturation across all weapon types by this stage of the war.
34. Zimmerman, *Maritime Command Pacific*, 87.
35. Steed, *Canadian Warships Since 1956*, 24.
36. Sandy McClearn, "Tribal Class," *Haze Gray and Underway*, 2006, http://www.hazegray.org/navhist/canada/postwar/tribww2/; Sandy McClearn, "'V' Class," *Haze Gray and Underway*, 2006, http://www.hazegray.org/navhist/canada/ww2/v/; Sandy McClearn, "'Cr' Class," *Haze Gray and Underway*, 2006, http://www.hazegray.org/navhist/canada/postwar/c/; Chris Fraser, "Official History of HMCS Algonquin (I)," *CFB Esquimalt Naval & Military Museum*, 2021, https://navalandmilitarymuseum.org/archives/articles/ship-histories/hmcs-algonquin-1st/; Chris Fraser, "Official History of HMCS Crescent," *CFB Esquimalt Naval & Military Museum*, 2021, https://navalandmilitarymuseum.org/archives/articles/ship-histories/hmcs-crescent/.
37. McClearn, "'Cr' Class."
38. Ron Barrie and Ken Macpherson, *Cadillac of Destroyers: HMCS St. Laurent and her Successors* (Ontario: Vanwell Publishing, 2004), 10.
39. Davis, "The 'St Laurent' Decision", 202–3.
40. Steed, *Canadian Warships Since 1956*, 50; Ken Macpherson and Ron Barrie, *The Ships of Canada's Naval Forces 1910–2002* (St. Catharines, ON: Vanwell Publishing, 2002), 59, 63, 67; Macpherson,

Frigates of the Royal Canadian Navy, 15; Barrie and Macpherson, *Cadillac of Destroyers*, 17; Sandy McClearn, "Tribal Class (DD/DDE) destroyer/destroyer escort," *Haze Grey & Underway*, 2006, http://www.hazegray.org/navhist/canada/postwar/tribww2/; McClearn, "V class." The wartime destroyers varied in displacement, with the refitted *Algonquin* at 2700 tons full load and 110 m long, and the Tribal class at 2800 tons full load and 115 m long.

41. Barrie and Macpherson, *Cadillac of Destroyers*, 9, 17; Davis, "The 'St Laurent' Decision," 208.
42. Davis, "The 'St Laurent' Decision," 201, 203.
43. Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 177.
44. Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 166–67, 179.
45. Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 179.
46. Davis, "The 'St Laurent' Decision," 202, 208.
47. Memorandum to Cabinet Defence Committee, RG24 NSS 1650-26/NSS 2200-50 of 17 August 1950, as cited in Davis, "The 'St Laurent' Decision," 203.
48. Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 182, 195.
49. Barrie and Macpherson, *Cadillac of Destroyers*, 9.
50. Davis, "The 'St Laurent' Decision," 202.
51. Barrie and Macpherson, *Cadillac of Destroyers*, 10.
52. Norman Friedman, *The Postwar Naval Revolution* (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1986), 161; Canadian War Museum, "Homing Torpedo Model," *Canadian War Museum*, https://www.warmuseum.ca/collections/artifact/1035277.
53. Friedman, *The Postwar Naval Revolution*, 75. Friedman does not indicate why BIDDER failed to enter widespread service, while it appears the Mark 35 suffered from a lack of reliability when used against a manoeuvring submarine: James V. Shannon, "Post-World War II Acoutic [sic] ASW Torpedo Development: A brief history of the MK-35, MK-41, MK-43 and MK-44," *Navweaps: Naval Weapons, Naval Technology and Naval Reunions*, June 14, 2002, http://www.navweaps.com/index_tech/tech-082.php#Torpedo_MK-35.
54. Barrie and Macpherson, *Cadillac of Destroyers*, 11, 17.
55. E. C. Meyers, *Thunder in the Morning Calm: The Royal Canadian Navy in Korea 1950-1955* (Ontario: Vanwell Publishing, 1997), 75.

56. Sandy McClearn, “Canadian Navy Gun Systems,” *Hazegray and Underway*, 2006, http://www.hazegray.org/navhist/canada/systems/guns/.
57. Tony DiGiulian, “Britain 4″/45 (10.2 cm) QF HA Marks XVI, XVII, XVIII and XXI – NavWeaps,” *NavWeaps: Naval Weapons, Naval Technology and Naval Reunions*, February 25, 2022, http://navweaps.com/Weapons/WNBR_4-45_mk16.php; Tony DiGiulian, “USA 3″/50 (7.62 cm) Marks 27, 33 and 34 – NavWeaps,” *NavWeaps: Naval Weapons, Naval Technology and Naval Reunions*, March 29, 2019, http://navweaps.com/Weapons/WNUS_3-50_mk27-33-34.php; McClearn, “Canadian Navy Gun Systems.”
58. Tony DiGiulian, “United Kingdom / Britain 4.5″/45 (11.4 cm) QF Marks I, III and IV – NavWeaps,” *NavWeaps: Naval Weapons, Naval Technology and Naval Reunions*, March 16, 2022, http://navweaps.com/Weapons/WNBR_45-45_mk1.php.
59. Tony DiGiulian, “Britain 4.7″/45 (12 cm) QF Mark IX and Mark XII – NavWeaps,” *NavWeaps: Naval Weapons, Naval Technology and Naval Reunions*, November 6, 2021, http://navweaps.com/Weapons/WNBR_47-45_mk9.php.
60. Meyers, *Thunder in the Morning Calm*, 50–51, 54–55, 71, 118, and 165.
61. Meyers, *Thunder in the Morning Calm*, 133–34.
62. Meyers, *Thunder in the Morning Calm*, 99
63. Meyers, *Thunder in the Morning Calm*, 191.
64. William P. Sparling, “Transitions: The Sheepdog navy goes to Korea,” *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 7, no. 1 (2004): 1–17, 8.
65. Meyer, *Thunder in the Morning Calm*, 183–86.
66. DiGiulian, “USA 3″/70,”; DiGiulian, “United Kingdom/Britain 4.5″/45”; DiGiulian, “Britain 4.7″/45”.
67. Meyers, *Thunder in the Morning Calm*, 59.
68. Meyers, *Thunder in the Morning Calm*, 54–55.
69. Meyers, *Thunder in the Morning Calm*, 55, 102.
70. Meyers, *Thunder in the Morning Calm*, 223.
71. “HMCS MICMAC R10/214,” *For Posterity's Sake*, undated, http://www.forposterityssake.ca/Navy/HMCS_MICMAC_R10_214.htm.
72. Sparling, “Sheepdog navy goes to Korea,” 9.

73. Sparling, “Sheepdog navy goes to Korea,” 10.
74. Sparling, “Sheepdog navy goes to Korea,” 13; Davis, “The ‘St Laurent’ Decision,” 201, 203.
75. Sparling, “Sheepdog navy goes to Korea,” 14.
76. Meyers, *Thunder in the Morning Calm*, 110.
77. Meyers, *Thunder in the Morning Calm*, 113.
78. Meyers, *Thunder in the Morning Calm*, 72–73, 109.
79. Meyers, *Thunder in the Morning Calm*, 136.
80. Meyer, *Thunder in the Morning Calm*, 143.
81. Meyer, *Thunder in the Morning Calm*, 182.
82. Meyers, *Thunder in the Morning Calm*, 213.

9 Jutlandia

Danish Naval Diplomacy in the Korean War

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If you ask a person on the street in Denmark when the Korean War took place, chances are the answer will be 1949. The reason for this collective mistake is a pop song that celebrates the deployment of the hospital ship *Jutlandia* to the Korean War from 1950 to 1953. This 1980s pop song by one of Denmark's most famous musicians immortalised the memory of the Danish contribution to the war.

The first lines of the text are interesting for several reasons:

In 1949 or somewhere around that time, there was a war in Korea.

The ship was called Jutlandia, and it got far away,

because there was a war in Korea.

Firstly, it has imprinted an inaccurate year for the war in the collective memory of a whole generation of Danes. This was done by the artist for lyrical reasons because 49 fits the melody better than 50. But more interestingly, the song shows how the war and the maritime contribution are seen by contemporary Danes. The understanding is that Denmark helped with humanitarian assistance despite the great physical distance to Korea because that is what one does when there is a war.

This is a very romanticised image of the Danish contribution. The reality was more complicated, and the political choices behind the deployment were far from self-evident. In fact, Danish politicians were lukewarm to the idea of engaging in the war, and an important concern was to get away with the cheapest possible contribution. However, the song highlights the power of ships to become potent symbols in collective mythmaking, and the same happened with Jutlandia in its own time.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. On the one hand, I explore the Danish deployment of a hospital ship to the Korean War as an expression of how a small European country decided to respond to the international crisis. I use the lens of naval diplomacy to structure the analysis around various stakeholders, namely the Soviet Union (USSR), the United Nations (UN), the United States (U.S.A.), the Republic of Korea, and the Danish population. The decision to send a humanitarian maritime contribution allowed Denmark to achieve important foreign policy goals while keeping the costs low and the risks minimal.

On the other hand, the chapter also provides a practical example of how Kevin Rowlands’ model for naval diplomacy can be used to structure the analysis. This is a theoretical framework that allows for a much more nuanced analysis than older theories. The purpose is to introduce the theory while exploring how applicable it is in this case study. I find that the model is useful even though the Danish hospital ship was civilian and not strictly naval. I also find that from a theoretical point of view, the model is almost too flexible and that it would benefit the study of naval diplomacy to have more normative standards for how the naval aspect fits in.

Naval Diplomacy

Naval diplomacy theory suggests that ships and naval forces have characteristics that make them uniquely suited for diplomatic signalling compared to other branches of the armed forces.[1]

The first advantage is geographical. Often the sea is the only way to reach the country you want to impress diplomatically. Navies operate on the ocean, which is a global commons, and warships of any nation can transit unhindered in international waters and even pass the territorial seas of other nations.[2] Therefore, unless the states are adjacent to one another, it may be more practical to send a ship than other types of military units. But more importantly, ships are flexible platforms whose appearance can be finely tuned to the desired diplomatic message. As Booth points out, ‘a warship can be transformed from a platform for a dance-band and cavorting local dignitaries, to a haven of refuge for nationals in distress, to a gun platform for shore bombardment.’[3] The same flexibility can also be applied to the ship's appearance in the area where it operates. A warship can appear neutral, assertive, or aggressive depending on its posture and communications with other ships in the area. This means that the posture can evolve over time as a diplomatic situation unfolds. The same flexibility can be difficult to achieve with air or land forces.

In the modern age, warships also have the advantage of being photogenic. An image of warships from different nations sailing in close formation is often an important outcome of naval exercises, and a surprising amount of time is allocated to such photo sessions.

Finally, perhaps the most important attribute that makes warships suitable for naval diplomacy is their endurance. Large warships can stay in an area for weeks or months, either visible or invisible, and they can come and go as they please.[4] In combination, these attributes give politicians attractive options when looking for ways to send diplomatic signals to allies and adversaries.

The acknowledgement that ships can be used as tools for diplomacy does not, however, say much about how it is done in practice. Kevin Rowlands suggests that stakeholder analysis is a useful approach to understanding specific expressions of naval diplomacy.[5] According to this perspective, naval diplomacy is a type of communication of a message from a sender to a recipient, and a model can be derived around the variables of *what*, *who*, and *how*.

The questions that must be asked are what you want to communicate to whom and how you want to do it, and together this answers the underlying question of ‘why’ a particular act of naval diplomacy takes place. This model gives a more nuanced framework for understanding naval diplomacy than, for example, the classical categories of definitive force, purposeful force, catalytic force, and expressive force offered by James Cable.[6]

There is no particular order between the questions, and in practice, they are answered in a dialectical process with each other. However, there are specific aspects to each question that need to be unpacked. The question of ‘what’ is concerned with the contents of the message that are intended to be communicated. Rowlands significantly broadens the scope of naval diplomacy by including acts of amity as well as enmity. Amity includes things such as the reassurance of allies, maritime security cooperation, and assistance. Enmity are the classical military tasks of coercion and deterrence as well as building situational awareness through picture compilation.[7] This is a more nuanced way of understanding naval signalling than Cable's traditional concept of ‘gunboat diplomacy,’ which focused on messaging to the enemy.[8]

The question of ‘who’ seeks to identify the audience of a particular act of naval diplomacy. There are almost never just two parties in naval diplomacy, and usually, there will be a range of more or less intentional recipients. To make sense of the various actors, Rowlands uses the concepts of primary, secondary, and tertiary stakeholders.[9] These are distinguished by their level of influence on the activity that is taking place. Primary stakeholders are the direct participants who make the decisions about what is happening. This can be a government or another organisation, such as an international alliance. Secondary stakeholders are directly affected by the action, and they might even have to respond or contribute. Rowlands uses the example of an international organisation that initiates an operation, and here the member states may be secondary actors even if they are the ones who provide the ships. Finally, tertiary participants are those indirectly affected by naval diplomacy. This means that there will be a wide range of actors in a specific instance of naval diplomacy, and the analysis must identify the role they play in the messaging that is taking place.

The question of ‘how’ relates to the question of hard and soft power.[10] Hard power is the ability to command and coerce an opponent into doing something they don’t want to do, and soft power is the ability to persuade and attract.[11] This means that actors in naval diplomacy have a broad range of options when designing their operations, ranging from blockades and strikes at the hard end to courtesy visits and humanitarian aid at the soft end.

In the following sections, this model for naval diplomacy is used to analyse the Danish contribution in the Korean War. Denmark wanted to achieve something specific with their effort, and therefore the contribution was designed to strike a balance between the stakeholders. Firstly, these stakeholders are described individually, and their influence on the mission is analysed. Then the findings are synthesised in a discussion. Finally, some observations are made regarding the applicability of Rowlands' theory about naval diplomacy to cases where the involved activities are not strictly naval.

The Jutlandia Expedition

Following the initiation of hostilities in June 1950, the UN officially requested that Denmark contribute to the operation to liberate South Korea. Almost two months later, on 18 August 1950, the Danish government officially offered to send hospital ship *Jutlandia*. This offer was accepted on 14 September by the UN Command, and the practical preparations for the deployment could start.

Jutlandia was a combined freight and passenger ship owned by the East Asiatic Company. It was built in 1934, was 133 meters long, 18 meters wide, and had a displacement of 8,500 tons. The ship needed significant modifications before being useful as a hospital ship. The work began in October 1950, and it meant that *Jutlandia* would be equipped with 300 hospital beds. This was significantly less than the 800 hospital beds on the American hospital ships of the *Haven*-class that *Jutlandia* would complement, but in practice, the capacity on *Jutlandia* turned out to be sufficient.[12]

On 23 January 1951, *Jutlandia* set off for its journey to Korea. The ship would remain in UN service until 16 October 1953, when it arrived back in Copenhagen. Twice in that time, *Jutlandia* was sent to Europe with patients who needed to return home, so conceptually, the mission was divided into three separate journeys to Korea. On the first two journeys from January to September 1951 and from November 1951 to July 1952, *Jutlandia* was stationed in Pusan Harbour. On the last journey from September 1952 to October 1953, the ship was at sea in Incheon Bay close to the frontline.[13]

Over those 33 months of UN service, *Jutlandia* treated 4,981 patients for a total of 84,819 patient days. Twenty-nine patients died during the treatment. In addition to the treatment of wounded soldiers, *Jutlandia's* crew also treated about 6,000 Korean civilians. It was not a part of the ship's official tasks to treat civilians, but after a long exchange of opinions between the Danish mission commander and the American leadership, the Danes were allowed to use spare capacity on *Jutlandia* for this purpose.[14]

In the following sections, I will analyse the Jutlandia expedition from different perspectives, using Rowlands' model for naval diplomacy. I will seek to answer what Denmark's purpose was in sending a hospital ship to the Korean War, centred around the most important stakeholders. These stakeholders are primarily Denmark's own enemies and allies and the Danish population. Countries directly affected by the war, like the ROK, played a smaller role in the Danish decision-making, but they were still affected by the Danish decision. For the sake of the flow of the argument, the stakeholders will be presented in the order of the Soviet Union (USSR), UN and United States, South Korea, and the Danish population.

Denmark's Korea Contribution and the USSR

When the UN asked Denmark to send a contribution to the Korean War, Danish politicians were afraid that the war would develop into a global conflict. It was in the early years of the Cold War, and it was not unthinkable that the USSR could react somehow to Danish participation against their North Korean allies.

The resolution that gave legal footing for the UN-flagged but American-led mission in Korea had only come into place because the USSR at the time was boycotting the UN. This was a Soviet protest against the fact that the Taiwanese government represented China in the Security Council, and it meant that the USSR had not been present at the meeting to exercise their veto rights when the decision was made (Midtgaard, 2001). The USSR, therefore, found the Korean mission both illegal and a provocation, and it was not unthinkable that Stalin could respond to Danish participation with a military reaction in Europe.[15]

This presented the Danish politicians with a catch-22 paradox: They needed to contribute to the Korean War to satisfy the Americans that provided military security against Soviet aggression, but Danish contributions could also increase the risk of Soviet aggression. The Danish government felt that Denmark's security situation was vulnerable. It had been little more than five years since Denmark was liberated from German occupation, and the reconstruction of the Danish military had only begun in 1946. By 1950, Denmark's military capacity was still low, and Denmark also had to contribute with troops to the allied forces in Germany. Denmark had signed the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949, but it was still unclear how solid the security guarantees were. In 1950, the eastern defence line of the alliance still went by the Rhine, and only after the outbreak of the Korean War did the treaty materialise into the structures of NATO.[16]

In other words, Danish politicians feared that sending military assistance to Korea would simultaneously undermine the ability to defend the country while also increasing the risk of war. As a result, they decided that Denmark would not provide direct military assistance to the Korea mission and instead would offer a humanitarian contribution of some sort. This was intended to send a distinctly non-aggressive signal to the USSR and prevent Soviet retaliation in Europe.

Denmark's Korea Contribution, the UN, and United States

The most decisive factor in shaping the Danish contribution to the Korean War was the relationship with the United States. After the war in Europe, it became clear that the United States was the main security provider for Denmark, and the Danish politicians wanted to keep good relations with Washington.

The Danish approach was based on two contradictory considerations. On the one hand, the Danish government was pleased to see that the United States and the UN engaged to defend a small state that had been invaded. This was the first big war that the newly established UN had to deal with, and many countries including Denmark, had high hopes that it would be a valuable security framework in the post-World War II era. It was, therefore, a reassuring message for a small European country, because it indicated that a similar reaction was likely if Denmark were to find itself in the same situation as South Korea.[17] It was, therefore, desirable, that Denmark demonstrated good faith when the United States and the UN requested assistance. This would show that Denmark was a reliable ally and a valuable contributor to the international community.

On the other hand, Danish politicians also seemed committed to delivering as little as possible. The fear of a Soviet reaction made it clear that a direct military contribution was out of the question, and that only humanitarian assistance would be offered. But it also seemed to be a priority for the Danish politicians to spend as few resources as possible. They did not find it reasonable that a country that received assistance through the Marshall Plan should also spend large resources in Korea.[18]

In the summer of 1950, the Danish government therefore engaged in a process of exploring how cheaply they could get off the hook. A significant concern for them was how Denmark's neighbours would respond, so they could offer something similar. Their first action was to reach out to Norway and Sweden in the hope the three countries could agree on a common Scandinavian answer to the requests from the UN. This way Denmark could avoid formulating an independent answer, and it could also prevent the three Nordic countries from driving up the costs by outbidding each other. It also gave an excuse for procrastinating on a decision because Denmark could refer to ongoing diplomatic processes.[19]

However, to the chagrin of the Danish government, Sweden and Norway went ahead and sent their own answers to the UN. This meant that Denmark would have to do the same. In their first reply, Denmark made it clear that it was impossible to provide a military contribution, and instead, it was offered to send medical equipment. This clearly did not satisfy American expectations, and the Danish politicians had to come up with something more.[20]

Therefore, the idea of providing an ambulance from the Danish Red Cross was formulated. Denmark had done the same 10 years earlier as assistance to Finland, and it had been considered a success. Danish politicians, therefore, forwarded an offer to the UN to provide an ambulance unit for the Korean mission. A few weeks later, it was decided to send a negotiator to the United States to sort out the details. Both Sweden and Norway had sent negotiators, and Denmark did not want to look bad in comparison, and also the Danish politicians had started to become confused why they had not received an answer to the offer of an ambulance.[21]

During the negotiations in August 1950, the Danish negotiator Karl Lehmann quickly realised that the Danish offer was vastly inadequate. The Americans were not interested in a civilian ambulance manned with Red Cross personnel, and they made it clear that Denmark would have to provide a complete military field hospital. If this was not possible, then they were not interested in a Danish contribution.[22]

This gave the Danish politicians significant problems. A field hospital would be far more expensive, and it would break the principle of not providing military assistance. But on the other hand, it was imperative to provide a contribution that was substantial enough to be appreciated in Washington.

In parallel to the offer of an ambulance, the Copenhagen based J. Lauritzen shipping company had independently offered a cargo ship to the UN for the Korea mission. They would provide the ship and crew for free, but the UN would have to pay the operating costs. This offer was eventually rejected, but it gave the inspiration to transform the idea of a field hospital into a maritime contribution.[23]

Sending a hospital ship to Korea would solve many problems for the Danish politicians. An important consideration was the implications for Denmark's national defence. A hospital ship would be a smaller drain on the limited medical resources within the Danish military. If Denmark had had to send a military field hospital, it would have left the country without this capability in case of an emergency at home.

Another benefit was the political message. It was possible to frame the hospital ship as a purely humanitarian effort and not a military contribution. This was done by putting the Danish Red Cross in charge of the practical operation and by anchoring the supervision of the expedition in the foreign ministry rather than in the defence ministry. To underscore the humanitarian nature of the Danish contribution, the ship was painted white with a red cross on the side. This was very different from the American military hospital ships that were primarily green. For practical reasons, it was decided that the expedition commander would have a military rank, which would ensure smoother cooperation with the Americans. But aside from that, a significant effort was put into giving the impression of a non-military contribution.[24]

The deployment of a hospital ship satisfied the American demands. It was an independent platform that could plug directly into the existing organisation and fulfil a real need. This way, Denmark was able to demonstrate commitment to both the UN and the United States while simultaneously avoiding a direct military contribution and maintaining a humanitarian profile. In the summer of 1951, the UN again requested a military contribution from Denmark, but it never materialised into an actual commitment from Denmark. Danish politicians again expressed a positive attitude but, in reality, managed to drag things out until the problem went away.[25] After some months, the Danish government was saved by NATO's newly established SHAPE headquarters, when Dwight D. Eisenhower, as the first Supreme Allied Commander Europe, recommended to the United States that Denmark should not be pushed to send more to the Korea mission, because the country's defence was too weak already.[26]

In the end, Denmark managed to get through the Korean War without sending a military contribution. Among the NATO countries that were also members of the UN, only three got through the Korean War without sending a military contribution: Norway, Denmark, and Iceland. For Iceland, it was never a relevant question because the country didn’t have a military, and Norway actually did offer to send a contingent of forces with special winter training. This way, Denmark was the only NATO country in the UN that managed to steer clear of ever offering a military contribution, and that was largely a product of the decision to send hospital ship. This maritime contribution was significant and noteworthy enough to satisfy the American expectations, and it let Denmark off the hook to deliver other things that the Danish politicians wanted to avoid.

Jutlandia and the Relationship to South Korea

The Danish decision to deploy a hospital ship to Korea was motivated by concerns about allies and enemies in Europe, and it had little to do with a desire to help South Korea. In fact, Danish politicians rather lamented the need to help a country that they did not feel affection for. At a closed meeting in parliament, Danish Prime Minister Hans Hedtoft noted that ‘it is unfortunate that the first time the United Nations steps in with weapons, it has to be for South Korea, which is a semi-corrupt, semi-fascist regime.’[27]

However, even if the relationship with South Korea was not instrumental to the Danish decision to launch the *Jutlandia* expedition, the ship's presence did contribute to relationship building over time. An important factor was the assistance that the ship offered to South Korean civil society. The Danish hospital ship was organised under the Danish Red Cross, and that opened opportunities for civilian interaction that the military ships did not have.

After arriving at Pusan, the Danish crew quickly learned that they had surplus hospital capacity. There was a huge civilian need for medical treatment in the city, and the Danish medical staff found it imperative to help. They, therefore, engaged in a protracted dialogue with the mission leadership to get permission to use spare capacity to help civilians. The Americans were sceptical about the idea, but the Danish expedition commander successfully argued that it was necessary to keep the civilian Danish medical crew motivated for the service.

The Danish assistance to South Korean civilians progressed in several steps. Firstly, it was agreed that doctors and nurses could assist in civilian hospitals on shore when they had time. This task became so important for the Danes that a detachment stayed behind in Pusan to continue the work when *Jutlandia* returned to Europe in 1951.[28] Later it was agreed that *Jutlandia* could also treat civilian patients on board, and 100 of the ship's hospital beds were allocated to civilians.[29] In total more than 6,000 Korean soldiers and civilians were treated on *Jutlandia,* including President Syngman Rhee who personally used the ship's dental clinic multiple times. This contributed to building a positive attitude between South Korea and Denmark, and *Jutlandia* became a shared symbol of the relationship between the countries. In March 2001, the South Korean government invited veterans from *Jutlandia* and their families to the ROK to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the ship to the country.[30] This shows the strength and longevity of the diplomatic effect that the Danish hospital ship created, and it speaks to the symbolism that a ship can carry.

Jutlandia and the Danish Population

The Danish population was a target audience for the *Jutlandia* expedition, but it was also an asset that the Danish government could leverage in the negotiations with the Americans. From the beginning, it was clear that there was support in the Danish population for supporting Korea, but also widespread scepticism about a direct military contribution. It was more in line with the Danish self-understanding to contribute with humanitarian assistance, and in that sense, the Jutlandia expedition was a safe choice. It would have required significant persuasion to convince the voters of a military contribution, and there was an election coming in the fall of 1950.

However, the public scepticism also proved useful for the Danish government. In 1951 when the UN again requested a military contribution from Denmark as a part of the so-called Uniting for Peace plan, the Danish politicians wanted to buy time to get off the hook. They communicated to the Americans that, in principle, they personally were positive about the idea but that they had a reluctant population to deal with. They also reaffirmed to the Americans that they were 'constantly attempting to educate [the] Danish public on [the] necessity [of] Danish support in Korea.'[31] Therefore, the Danish government would wait to see the results of the ongoing cease-fire negotiations, that they believed would be successful. When the negotiations failed, they continued to postpone the discussion, and eventually, they were saved when NATO asked the United States not to put pressure on Denmark.

When the war ended, and *Jutlandia* returned home, the humanitarian nature of Denmark's contribution was emphasised. The ship arrived in Copenhagen on 16 October 1953, and foreign minister H.C. Hansen said that 'For Denmark as an old seafaring nation and as a country with humanitarian traditions, the hospital ship *Jutlandia* was a natural form of assistance to the UN in the fight in Korea.'[32] In reality, of course, the decision to send *Jutlandia* to Korea three years earlier was based on realpolitik and had been made under significant pressure from the United States, and it must be categorised as a rhetorical stretch to call it 'natural.' However, for the Danish population, this explanation made sense and contributed to a positive attitude about the mission.

The ship *Jutlandia* was scrapped in 1965, but the memory of the Danish maritime contribution to Korea has had a lasting impact.[33] In the 1980s, a pop song immortalised *Jutlandia* and celebrated the Danish humanitarian effort.[34] It has also become the name of an apartment building in Copenhagen, a company that produces doors, a party band, a garden chair, an agility competition for dogs, and a variety of potatoes.[35] In 1999, a political party in the Danish government suggested that Denmark organise a Jutlandia II mission to the Adriatic Sea in connection with the war in the former Yugoslavia. So *Jutlandia* lives on in the Danish collective memory as a demonstration of the symbolic value that a ship can have given the right diplomatic circumstances.

The Big Picture

The analysis has shown that the memory of Jutlandia is highly romanticised. It is a pleasant story that confirms things that Danes would like to be true about themselves and the benevolent attitude of their ancestors. This image is a testimony to the symbolic value that a ship can have. The Danish contribution turned out to be greatly successful as a diplomatic move, because *Jutlandia* was a strong symbol. This has ensured the legacy continues even 70 years later.

However, in reality, it was a decision based on realpolitik. The mission was a compromise by politicians in a small state who wanted to get away with contributing as little as possible when their great power ally demanded participation. The stakeholder analysis showed that many actors influenced Denmark's decision to contribute with a hospital ship to Korea. Concerns about the repercussions from the USSR and the reaction from the voters convinced the Danish government that a direct military contribution was out of the question. Concerns over alliance politics and a desire to please the Americans made it clear that Denmark, nevertheless, would have to offer something that was substantial enough to look generous. This led to the decision to send a humanitarian contribution in the shape of a hospital ship.

In theoretical terms, the Danish government and the United States were primary stakeholders. They were directly involved in the mission and were present when the decisions were being made. The ROK can be described as a secondary stakeholder. The mission directly affected Korean society, and there were tangible positive consequences for the relationship between Denmark and South Korea. However, South Korea did not play any role in the decision to initiate the mission.

The USSR and the Danish population can be described as tertiary stakeholders. They did not have direct influence on the decision-making process, nor were they directly affected by *Jutlandia*'s work in Korea, but the USSR and the Danish population were still undeniably important target audiences for the diplomatic messaging. This shows that the grouping of stakeholders does not say much about their relative importance for shaping the mission. It would also be fair to describe the UN as a tertiary stakeholder. Officially the UN was the organising body of the mission, and the requests for Danish assistance came from the UN. However, the negotiations over a Danish contribution circumvented the UN and happened directly between Copenhagen and Washington.

Conclusion

The chapter has shown that sending a hospital ship to the Korean War solved many problems for Denmark. It allowed the Danish government to balance the need for delivering a militarily relevant contribution to the American war effort with a desire to look disengaged and non-aggressive to the USSR. It also demonstrated the symbolic power of ships, and in that context, the *Jutlandia* expedition managed to make a lasting impression that outweighed its relatively small costs. This way the chapter demonstrated the relevance of discussing naval diplomacy as a phenomenon.

By leveraging the flexibility of Rowlands' model, the chapter reveals something that can be seen as a potential weakness in the theoretical framework: There is inherently nothing in the stakeholder model that requires a naval element at all. It is rather a useful model for diplomatic messaging in general, and therefore it doesn't necessarily contribute to an understanding of the specificities of naval diplomacy.

In fact, it is debatable whether the *Jutlandia* mission was technically speaking an expression of naval diplomacy. *Jutlandia* wasn't a naval ship, and the Danish politicians had deliberately placed the operation outside the defence ministry. The mission was therefore specifically designed not to appear naval, but because of the flexibility of the analytical model, the perspective of naval diplomacy was still applicable. It was a maritime operation within a military framework, and the civilian appearance was a design choice to achieve a specific diplomatic message. The same mission could have been conducted with a military posture by applying a different paint colour and organising the crew in the defence ministry instead of the Red Cross.

The chapter therefore also illustrates why ships are particularly suitable as tools for diplomatic messaging. The Danish deployment of a hospital ship in the Korean War shows how finely the appearance of a ship can be adjusted to send a particular message, and that ships have a unique symbolic significance that can create large and lasting effects in the minds of decision-makers and the public information space.

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